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THE
ILLEGAL TRIAL
" OF JESUS

Earl L. Wingo
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Charter Books

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Dedicated
to
My Wife
Myrtle R. Wingo

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PREFACE

No doubt millions have read of the so-called "trial" of Jesus Christ, as set forth, rather briefly, in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Also, the references thereto as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

It may be added that thousands of impassioned and deeply eloquent sermons have been preached, and a few books written, upon this subject. All of them have, no doubt, been found both interesting and inspirational.

One cannot read those accounts without immediately concluding that the treatment of the Christ was most brutal and spiteful; and that His persecutors seemed obsessed with a determination to magnify, in every possible manner, His suffering and humiliations.

A close study of this highly interesting subject—embraced by both the Hebrew and Roman trials—will establish, beyond question of doubt, that Jesus was not given even the remotest semblance of a legal trial; but, on the contrary, was made the victim of an unholy, mob-rule persecution which resulted in murdering their Victim!

Many of us are familiar with some of the outstanding, famous trials of civilization, involving people of international prominence—or those who were placed into the international spotlight of fame because of the atrociousness of the crime with which they were charged. We immediately think of such personages as Socrates, Aaron Burr, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, and Warren Hastings.

While some of us may not agree as to the justice of the ultimate results of some or all of those important trials, or the degree of punishment thereafter imposed, we must admit that, in each instance, they were all accorded the full benefit of the legal rules of orderly procedure, and the application of existing, beneficial laws of that day and time. None were denied the substantial rights guaranteed the accused. Moreover, positive proof of guilt had to be first established by competent evidence from reliable witnesses. To have done less would have been to encourage a state of barbarity.

Nothing could possibly be more revolting to one's sense of justice than to behold any court denying the accused his well-defined rights, either through ignorance, prejudice or corruption!

It is well known that, according to many judicial decisions of a large number of the courts, quite a few individuals, entirely innocent of crime, have been convicted and sentenced to die, only to later learn that a serious error was committed—when it was too late to rectify the wrong done, And such a spectacle is always heart-rending and sad to contemplate.

Mob-rule is universally condemned as being uncivilized. Blood-thirsty, frenzied men have no sense of justice, as they carry forward their deeds of cowardice against helpless, pitiful victims!

But what about the "trials" of Jesus?

From the viewpoint of the author, now engaged in his thirty-second, consecutive year as an active practitioner in a great many of the criminal courts of this section of the Nation, I can say, without reservations, that, except for the trials of Jesus, there has never been, nor shall there ever be, in the annals of criminal jurisprudence, a more tragic and deliberate disregard for existing laws and rules of equitable procedure. Indeed, there was never a trial so filled with conspiracies, animosities and base corruption as the one which involved Him!

Many years ago, after having unreservedly accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I began an intensive study of the conditions which obtained in Judea, during the life of Jesus, with a view of trying to understand the motives which prompted the early Jewish religious groups, and the members of the Roman society, to maintain such an apparent hatred of the Christ. And now, having become familiar with the history of their background, character and teachings, I feel that others should have a truthful insight to those conditions in order that they, too, might better understand the cause for so much unrest which definitely permeated the Judean air when Jesus was placed on trial before the Sanhedrin, or

ecclesiastical court, and also before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor.

Some may adopt the charitable view of lending excuse to the early Jewish leaders upon the premise that the treatment accorded Jesus was in keeping with the prophecies, and that it was His will that they be fulfilled. This, however, is something which God, alone, shall decide.

This much is unquestionably true: The inspired Word of God, set forth in the New Testament, relates how Jesus was subjected to two separate "trials." That He was condemned to die and later crucified upon a rugged cross on Calvary's hill.

There is raised this inquiry: Were the Jews without blame for this ordeal?

Certainly, according to the Gospel narratives, the Jews made the charge of blasphemy in the first trial before the Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish court; and they later carried Him before Pilate, the Roman Governor, where they charged Him with sedition, and sought to prove it by their witnesses; that they, the Jews, undertook to have Pilate approve of their condemnation and sentence of death; and that they, the Jews, demanded that Jesus be crucified.

It may be added, however, that the final act of crucifying Jesus was done by the Romans. But, then, one may further inquire: Upon whom should the greater blame be charged, the Jews or the Romans?

When Jesus was before Pilate, and Pilate reminded the Master that he, Pilate, had power to order Him crucified, Jesus replied:

"Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore *he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*"

There can be no doubt that Jesus was referring to none other than the high priest, Caiaphas, who held the loftiest position in the Jewish society. It was this same high priest who personally led Jesus and the mob to the court of the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate.

A careful study and analysis of all of the Jewish laws in existence when Jesus was tried brings one to the definite

conclusion that the entire proceedings were no more than a mockery and a farce. Every protective law was ignored when dealing with Jesus. And there shall be pointed out, in this review of the progressive steps of the ordeal, from the time of the illegal arrest to the unlawful crucifixion, the many wrongs committed with deliberation, hatred and spleen by the brutal enemies of the Man of Galilee.

It is the hope of the author that many who shall read this story of His indescribable suffering and humiliations, will come to the full realization that, after all, the one and only hope remaining for a restless, war-ridden, sin-cursed humanity can be found in Him as their Redeemer and Savior.

This, I believe with all of my heart:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And I desire to add that this belief of mine has been the source of lasting consolations; bringing to me a rich experience, and countless blessings which were certainly undeserved.

Earle L. Wingo

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Earle L. Wingo has been actively engaged in the practice of law in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for the past thirty-two years. And in this period he has defended more than two hundred individuals charged with murder.

In 1951 he compiled a text book on the subject "Mississippi Criminal Law and Procedure" which was published by The Harrison Company, Atlanta, Georgia, and which is widely used by the bench and bar of Mississippi.

Mr. Wingo served for nine years on the State Board of Law Examiners, and is a past President of the Bar Association of his State.

Jesus measured the scope of His Supreme Sacrifice upon Calvary's Cross when he said:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

John, 15: 13.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."
John, 1: 11.

CHAPTER I

JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

By reference to the second chapter of Luke, from the first through the fourteenth verses, we find this beautiful story of the humble birth of Christ the Lord:

"And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own City.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the City of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, this day, in the City of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly host praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The birth of Jesus, in a borrowed stable in the little village of Bethlehem, was also the birth of Christianity. And the humble surroundings of His nativity were typical of His manner of living thereafter; for He had no desire whatever for earthly possessions. And this accounts for His having

been buried in a borrowed tomb through the thoughtfulness and kindness of Joseph of Aramathea.

C. P. J. Mooney, on December 22, 1912, in a beautiful editorial appearing in the Memphis, Tennessee Commercial Appeal, under the caption: "Jesus, The Perfect Man," concluded with this inspiring appraisal of Him:

"Jesus spoke the truth; He lived the truth, and truth is eternal."

"The human experiences of 2,000 years show that Jesus never made a mistake.

"History has no record of any other man leading a perfect life or doing everything in logical order. Jesus is the only person whose every action and whose every utterance strike a true note in the heart and mind of every man born of woman.

"No poet, no dreamer, no philosopher loved humanity with the love that Jesus bore toward all men.

"Who, then, was Jesus?

"He could not have been merely a man, for there never was a man who had two consecutive thoughts absolutely in true perfection.

"Jesus must have been what Christendom proclaims him to be—a Divine Being—or He could not have been what He was. No mind but an infinite mind could have left behind those things which Jesus gave to the world as a heritage!"

One of the most saddening revelations of the human heart is found in the base and cruel attitude of those early Jewish religious leaders toward Jesus. In all of His life on this earth He had never done them a single wrong.

Repeatedly, they sought to entrap, humiliate and embarrass Him—and finally, with equal determination, to destroy Him—for no reason except complete misunderstanding of His teachings, and the real purpose of His ministry upon this earth. Their hearts were as cold as their heads were hard.

Certainly it would be a great truth to say that the life, character and personality of the Lowly Nazarene transcends every person of all ages. He yet stands alone against the

entire background of human experiences as reflected in transitory, human history. No one can possibly be compared to Him. Even the greatest of men appear in pitiful contrast with the Christ. And this will, of course, remain true to the very end of time.

One may easily appreciate the unquestioned greatness of Jesus by reading the things which He taught, and the manner in which He taught upon all occasions. Down through the unfolding centuries He has been truthfully called "The Great Teacher."

The confession of Simon Peter was the true affirmation of the New Testament when he said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Moreover, it explained the life of Jesus and His reign in the hearts of Christian men and women since the advent of His great ministry which culminated upon the cross at Calvary.

Further confirmation of His Divine nature came from the voice of God. When Jesus was baptized by John, God spoke up and said: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." Then, again, at the transfiguration, the same voice of God said: "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!"

And what about His absolute dominance over the forces which produce death? This, alone, is ample proof of His Divinity and His being truly the Son of God. Yes, His command to Lazarus to "Come forth," alive, from a four-day-old grave, was something far more than mere magic—it was the revelation of the power of God!

In considering the life of Jesus, and considering His great character and personality, we must never overlook the fact that, while He was truly Divine, He was also human. There reposed in the heart of Jesus a deep and abiding love for a lost world. And He shared His Father's redemptive purpose. His willingness to openly and publicly identify Himself with known sinners and publicans, and to share their shame of iniquity, shows the unmeasured compassion which He always bore towards all of them. On no occasion was He ever known to turn a deaf ear to some plea for relief of distress, pain or anguish.

As we read of His willing sacrifice on the rugged cross of

Calvary, for the sins of mankind, we there find the world's most beautiful example of unswerving devotion to the Father's will. And it was positive evidence of heroic, sustained courage and triumphant faith. With Him there was never a thought of turning back from the bitter ordeal of inhuman torture, suffering and anguish to which He well knew He would be subjected. Obedience to the will of His Father was His only concern and His only desire!

While Jesus was upon this earth, He plainly enumerated the high cost of discipleship. When someone glibly offered to follow Him, Jesus meekly reminded him: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of God hath nowhere to lay His head." This, then, was certainly no elaborate promise of a life of ease, but, rather, one of great sacrificing and privation in a spirit of unselfishness and abiding humility.

As may be expected, uncounted thousands were so closely wedded to the duties and relationships of the world that they were unwilling to renounce those ties and follow Him. Others found His words hard to understand, and His standards of human conduct too severe and too hard to accept. And they, like the rich, young ruler of Biblical days, refused to give up his earthly accumulations, and turned from His majestic leadership to finally drift back into the ways of common-place existence—soon to be forever forgotten, and lost amid the hurley-burley of sinful men.

The great love which Jesus bore for all humanity was truly without parallel; and His eternal compassion for the lame and sick and blind, and even the wretched sinner, knew no bounds. His hands were ever ready to heal, and His heart ever ready to forgive.

This, then, was the Christ whom the Jews, in the year A. D. 30, spat upon, ridiculed, slapped, scourged, crowned with thorns, and then brutally nailed to a cross, to die alone!

After experiencing the untold agonies of inhuman brutalities, and while conscious that life would last but a short while longer, this same Jesus, with blood-filled eyes and parched lips, raised His precious head in the direction of His Heavenly

Father and uttered a fervent prayer of pardon for His brutal murderers by saying:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Shortly afterwards, all was silent. Then the Master drooped His weary head, and was heard to whisper:

“It is finished, Father. Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

Even in the fleeting, last moments of life, Jesus was not unmindful of great compassion, nor for His unfailing sense of forgiveness.

CHAPTER II

PRE-TRIAL DAYS IN JUDEA

In order that one might more fully appreciate the reasons for the brutal treatment of Jesus, it would be well to set forth a brief sketch of the tumultuous conditions which existed at that time in Judea.

A glance at the political scene will reveal that the Jews had gone through a process of slow successions and were completely dominated by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and finally the Romans. And it was while the Jews were under the domination of the Romans that Herod the Great, a real criminal and murderer, ascended to the throne in Judea. This arch scalawag disgraced his high office until his unwept death occurred in 4 B. C. And then the country was divided into three districts, known as tetrarchies, with each being under the command of a tetrarch. They later became known as procurators. In the year 6 A. D. all Judea became a Roman province, and was then governed by procurators who had been sent out from Rome.

It may well be appreciated that the political situation in Judea, at the time of Christ, was quite complicated and anomalous in many respects, having undergone frequent changes, but retaining through them all certain peculiarities which made the country somewhat unique among the other dependencies of Rome. They were allowed, for a short time only, to maintain a certain degree of semi-independence. Almost always, however, there arose serious disputes as to the limitations which had been imposed, since there does not appear to have been any specific treaty defining the mutual rights and obligations existing between the two powers.

Judea, being a subject state, was subject to the whims and caprices of Rome, and to be sure the Roman authorities not only could, but did, frequently interfere in matters of legislation and administration whenever Roman interests required.

Since the Romans were the conquerors and the Jews were the conquered, there soon developed a total destruction of

their religious and political freedoms. Indeed, the Jews soon found that their beliefs and creeds had become completely degenerated into burdensome observances which were strictly imposed by their high priests, scribes and rulers.

Tiberius Caesar, as the Roman Emperor, became the political master of both Herod and Pontius Pilate. And although Caesar was the real procurator, or Governor, of Judea, it will be noted that Pilate served in that capacity during the time of the trial of Jesus, as a political substitute for the Emperor in that particular area. It should be further kept in mind that every word and deed of Pilate was subject to the express approval of Caesar whose displeasure Pilate was always keen to avoid. Then, too, because of the comparative short terms allowed those political appointees, together with the frivolous reasons assigned for their summary dismissal, we can readily account for the cowardice and vacillating attitude of Pilate in time of great need for a show of moral courage and independent action.

One of the loftiest positions to be held by a Jew in Palestine was that of high priest. By reason of his office, he became the presiding judge of the Jewish court, known as the Sanhedrin, which consisted of seventy-one members of the Jewish society. Caiaphas served as high priest when Jesus was tried. And we shall elaborate upon his character and his functions in another chapter, because of the important role played by him when so many cruelties were inflicted upon the Christ by the Sanhedrin as well as the high priest.

There were two principal religious groups in Judea: The Sadducees and the Pharisees.

The Sadducees were under the complete domination of a man by the name of Annas, the deposed high priest, whose son-in-law was, as stated, the appointed high priest. This group did not believe in the resurrection, nor rewards or punishment in a life beyond the grave. With them, all ended in death. All of their beliefs and teachings, therefore, ran counter to the things which Jesus was teaching and practicing in Judea.

The Pharisees were an arrogant group, filled with hypocrisy, who seemed pleased to advise and give free counsel in

their "better-than-thou" attitudes of false piety. Tradition and custom was everything with them.

The Sadducees were able to win the confidence, in a measure, of those in power, and thus received from the Romans the highest positions within the Sanhedrin, with the result that almost ninety per cent of the membership of the Sanhedrin were made up of Sadducees.

Petty jealousies, suspicions and lust for more power and greater prominence seemed rampant among these two religious groups. Almost everywhere one could observe the grim evidence of selfishness written upon the countenances of even the humblest Jews. Also, it was a well known fact that both the Sadducees and the Pharisees maintained an inward and secret contempt for their Roman rulers. No wonder, then, that there was general confusion, distrust and hatred in the bewildered Judean air!

It was Paul of Tarsus, the great convert, who described the two Jewish religious groups in this manner:

"Being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful!"

What a stinging and yet truthful indictment against the so-called religious groups and leaders in Judea in the time of Christ! And Paul knew whereof he spoke, for he lived among and preached to them for several years. Yes, Paul had seen the evidence of that with which they stood accused by him.

In later chapters it will be shown, conclusively, that the bitterest enemies of Jesus were these same two religious sects; that they were never able to see eye to eye with nor to understand the simple teachings of Christ; and that they never lost an opportunity to give full vent to their hatred of Him, as they sought, ever so often, to humiliate and embarrass the Lowly Nazarene—but always to no avail.

Therefore, it was into this highly discordant, wicked and turbulent state of affairs within the Jewish society, in the year

A. D. 27, that Jesus of Nazareth, the sinless, humble and meek son of an unknown carpenter, appeared upon the scene—bringing His great messages of forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life to all mankind.

What a wonderful, peaceful world this would be today if those early Jewish leaders had only accepted Him, and had followed His great advice to "*Love one another as I have loved you!*" But, when one's heart is already packed to full capacity with hatred, ill-will, backbiting, prejudices, spleen, and unrighteousness, there hardly is any room left for love, sympathy, kindness, unselfishness or any other worthy attribute! Maybe someday, before He returns, the world will have changed—and men and women will accept Him and His teachings as the true rule and guide for human conduct and human relations; and thus banish all strife and needless misunderstandings in an already troubled world.

CHAPTER III

JEWISH HOPES FOR AN EARTHLY KING

For several hundred years before the birth of Christ, and the advent of His ministry, the priests and scribes had openly taught the Jews to look forward to the coming of a Messiah who would not only restore them to a position of power and prosperity, but would immediately re-establish the earthly kingdom of David, and thus relieve them of the heavy burdens of taxation so ruthlessly imposed upon them by their Roman conquerors. And they believed this with all their hearts, and looked forward, each day, to the arrival of their earthly king.

By now, they had lost all pride as a captive people, and this Messianic expectation remained foremost in their hearts and minds. Indeed, it served as their one consolation—something to look forward to—as they bemoaned the hardships and privations to which they had been for so long subjected. Deprived of an earthly king, or a ruler of any kind, for that matter, their hearts seemed to long for the great day when He would arrive. And their eagerness, at times, reached such a high pitch that they were often misled into the belief that their long expected Messiah had, in fact, come among them. Still, they maintained the great hopes and high expectations that, ere long, he would redeem them from the bonds of slavery and give to each a life of ease and splendor.

It will be recalled that when John the Baptist began his crusade for repentance and spoke so fervently of the coming day of judgment, the Jews, their hopes aflame within them, began to whisper to each other that this man was none other than the long-awaited Messiah. But, when they made inquiry of John as to this, he quickly and firmly refuted their speculations, adding that he was merely a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the coming of the *real* Messiah! Then, to add a note of encouragement, John said to them: "I baptise with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who is coming after me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Again, when Jesus had miraculously fed the five thousand

men with five barley loaves and two small fishes, they crowded about Him and virtually demanded, then and there, that He be crowned their king. But again He told them that His kingdom was not of this earth, and He bade them depart for their homes, as He went again, and alone, into the mountains to pray.

It may be said that the resistance of Jesus to such a plan and purpose—that of being their earthly king—had the definite effect of weakening the great miracle of the feeding which they had just witnessed; and was, no doubt, the first turning of the tide of popular enthusiasm for Him. They felt that, if He were really the expected Messiah, He certainly should have let them, then and there, proclaim Him to be their earthly king!

The lot of the Jews was certainly not very happy. Through the darkest hours of their humdrum existence there were ever present a full allotment of prophets and other religious leaders to constantly remind them that hope was not lost, and that, in the near future, God would take better care of them, and relieve them of their misery and constant disappointments.

What the Jews had hoped and prayed for was a Kingdom of God—not in righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost—but in meat and drink! They cherished the thought of and insisted upon a kingdom on earth which would, beyond doubt, rival all others; and one which would also produce a miraculous triumph over their despised Roman rulers.

Therefore, on the morning after the day when their efforts to make Jesus their earthly king, we see the vast majority of His followers either remaining in their homes or going toward Jerusalem to celebrate the great Feast of the Passover. They simply could not understand the refusal of the Christ to share their wild enthusiasm and thus be the means of fulfilling their highest hopes and fondest dreams.

Although Jesus repeatedly sought to explain to them that His kingdom was not of this earth, and that they should not labor for the meat which would perish, and should be more concerned about the meat which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of God was able to give unto them,

they turned away from Him by the uncounted thousands, and refused to believe that which He so plainly taught and preached. This was a totally different Messiah and Messianic Kingdom from that which they conceived and had wished for.

One can easily imagine the great joy of the hearts of those Jews when they thought there was a chance to proclaim a miracle-man as their earthly king. This kind of a king, they reasoned, would cure all who suffered with physical ailments, and even bring the dead back to life! With such a king there would be no death among the Jews; no pain, no suffering, no disappointments. Life, in such circumstances, would be perfect for them! The trouble with their reasoning and plans came from the fact that their only concern was for the carnal rather than the spiritual factors involved.

Jesus had assured them, upon more than one occasion: "I am the bread of life", and to share in that food was to have everlasting life; but they, somehow, did not have the faith to believe what His words had said. That, to them, would have had the effect of completely upturning all of their Messianic thoughts. It was more than they were willing to accept.

This, then, was the regrettable partings of the ways between Jesus and a vast majority of His followers—and they were, by now, fast turning into His bitterest enemies; all because they failed to understand the logic and truth of His wonderful words. And it may be added that the disappointment, upon that occasion, was mutual, because their complete lack of faith and their desertion of Him in a great hour of His ministry well served to break the Heart of the Son of God!

Scripture tells the story in a few words:

"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

Yes, the crucial hour of decision was past, and the hand upon the silent dial of destiny was plainly seen pointing to the hour of His death!

When consideration is given to the great turmoil and stress of the days to follow, it will be well to keep in mind that most

of the trouble came from this hope of the Jews for an earthly king. To the very last hours of His life on this earth, His closest followers—His disciples—*still* thought that He would consent to be their *earthly king!*

CHAPTER IV

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS INVOLVED AGAINST JESUS

The following is a list of those who actively participated in the tragic and cowardly crucifixion of the Christ:

1. Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, who betrayed his Master and best friend for thirty pieces of silver.
2. Annas, a Sadducee, the political boss of Judea, before whom Jesus was first taken after the arrest.
3. Caiaphas, a Sadducee, the son-in-law of Annas, and the high priest who presided over the Jewish trial of Jesus.
4. Pontius Pilate, Governor of Judea, before whom Jesus was taken twice for trial, and who, though finding Him not guilty four separate times, turned Him over to the mob to be crucified.
5. Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, before whom Jesus was also taken for trial.
6. Tiberius Caesar, Emperor of Rome during the "trial" of Jesus.
7. The Great Sanhedrin, which was the ecclesiastical or Jewish religious court, before whom Jesus was first tried for "blasphemy".
8. The Sadducees, a religious group which predominated in the membership of the Jewish court.
9. The Pharisees, another so-called religious group who followed customs, traditions and rituals rather than the laws of God.
10. The unruly, cruel, inhuman mob of ingrates who persecuted, humiliated and finally crucified Jesus Christ.

We shall now take up, in the above order, the ten principal actors in that awful drama involving Jesus:

JUDAS ISCARIOT

Almost automatically, when one thinks of a dastardly betrayer, there comes to mind the name of Judas, one of the supposedly loyal disciples of Jesus. It was he, who, for thirty

pieces of silver, planted the betrayer's kiss upon the cheek of his Master.

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the high priests, and said unto them: What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."

"Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said: Hail, Master, and kissed Him."

Thus was the unholy bargain sealed and completed. Judas, to be sure, deliberately waited until after the midnight hour, under cover of darkness, near the garden of Gethsemane, to betray his Master by placing the filthy kiss from his putrescent lips upon the cheek of the Christ. That was the arranged signal of the money-mad demon for which the Roman soldiers and temple guards had waited; and without further ceremony they seized and bound Jesus like He might have been a long-hunted desperado; and took Him, in chains, to His bitterest enemy, Annas, for trial.

Judas hailed from Kerioth in Judea, and was the only Judean among the disciples. He had been repeatedly honored by Jesus in that he had been sent upon holy missions; had been given the power to cast out devils, and had been appointed as the treasurer of the little group of disciples.

Why, then, one would inquire, was he so eager to deliver his Master into the hands of sinful men—knowing that, in consequence thereof, Jesus would be brutally punished and finally crucified?

Because greed and love for money was his undoing! And he became greatly disturbed and highly disappointed when he began to realize that Jesus had no possible intention of ever setting up an earthly kingdom. Then, too, he witnessed the refusal of Jesus to accede to the demands of the large group of followers that He be their king, and that Jesus then began to effect a realignment along spiritual lines. Worldly pomp and power were his dreams and hopes, and, realizing that such was not in the plans of the Master, he

assumed an attitude of great resentment and bitterness for the spiritual program of the Christ. He felt that he was following a pauper rather than an earthly king! Hate filled the heart of Judas as he determined to get what he could for the betrayal of Jesus.

In reading the incident of His arrest, we recall that, when the soldiers, led by Judas, stated to Jesus, that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ replied: "*I am He,*" they all fell backwards, and went to the ground! This was the shock which they received when made conscious of being in the actual, personal presence of the living, breathing Son of God! And it took them several moments to regain their composure before proceeding with the unlawful arrest.

And from that moment forward, Judas was filled with a deep sense of shame and remorse, for he soon thereafter admitted having played the fool.

The human heart can experience no greater sting than that of justified remorse of conscience. And for Judas, he well knew that there would never be any redemption! He was forever lost—lost amid the catacombs of desolate and despised men!

Then what happened to this arch betrayer?

"Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood! And they said: What is that to us? See thou that! And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

Yes, Judas willingly confessed, after it was too late, that he had sinned by betraying the innocent blood of Christ! Betrayed his loyal and best friend and benefactor into the hands of the enemy, with full knowledge of the consequences of a lonesome death on Calvary's cross!

No wonder the remorse and deep sense of shame and disgrace was so intense that the world's most despicable traitor found no other course open to him but to place a rope about his neck and commit suicide upon the public highway!

And what a grim spectacle! A wretched, down-cast, hopeless betrayer seen dangling from the end of a sturdy rope that all might behold the price of despair! And what a grim reminder of the eternal and extreme penalty which was self-inflicted by one whose last vestage of hope had been quickly and surely supplanted by a dire sense of utter despair! Being wholly devoid of character, his lust for money outweighed all sense of self-respect and decency. His attitude was confession of wrong without repentance!

And now, after the passage of almost two thousand long years, his cowardly deed of treachery still remains fresh in the hearts and memory of uncounted billions, wherever located within the realm of civilization, who despise him, and regard his very name as a symbol of shame, slander, infamy and complete disgrace! No greater insult could be hurled at another than to say of him that he is a "Judas!"

Jesus, we know, was renowned for His positiveness—speaking out in plain terms of either praise or condemnation. And in all of the many, many expressions of the Master, nowhere can there be found, falling from His lips, a more stinging statement of appraisal than that which He made concerning Judas Iscariot, His betrayer, when He said:

"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of Him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born!"

Listen to the condemnation of Jesus:

"Good were it for that man if he had never been born!"

Would Jesus have made such a statement if, as some would believe, Judas was born to play the part he did in the betrayal of Christ? Does predestination enter into the picture? The writer thinks not! Had Judas been born to assume that unpopular, cowardly role, then the all-forgiving compassionate Christ would certainly have known about it, and full pardon would have been passed unto Judas like Jesus so freely sought pardon for His murderers while dying on the cross.

Judas was human, possessed with human frailties, and coupled with an inborn greed for earthly possessions, power

and prestige. That was his greatest and all-consuming sin. Therefore, it may be said that he deserved the condemnation for his dastardly deed of betrayal of the Master.

ANNAS, THE POLITICAL BOSS OF JUDEA

It was in the year 7 A. D. that the procurator, Coponius, appointed his friend, Annas, the son of Seth, an Alexandrian Sadducee, to become the high priest at Jerusalem. That, incidentally, was the highest appointive office of Jewry.

The high priestly family of Annas held full sway, with only a few brief interruptions, for the following fifty-one years. All six of his sons followed their father as high priest during that long period of time; and it was his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who, through the dominant influence of this same Annas, held that high office during the time when Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin in A. D. 30.

Although Annas had then become an old and rather feeble man, in his late eighties, he was still possessed with great wealth and political power in Jerusalem. And there appeared something awesome in the long wisp of snow-white hair which constantly dangled before the dark green eyes of this man who boasted of being the master of the people. He was their political boss; and his every thought, word and deed conveyed the height of his extreme egotism.

Moreover, it was generally admitted that old Annas had the most superb intelligence among the ruling elements in all Judea; and he seemed unacquainted with fear or remorse of conscience. His tyrannical and unholy philosophy was that of "rule or ruin."

He had been quite generous in providing numerous luxuries for his son-in-law, and he was never the least timid about reminding Caiaphas of the lasting and unpaid debt of gratitude which was owing to Annas. Therefore, it was not unusual for Caiaphas, when he knew it, to unflinchingly do the bidding of his father-in-law, regardless of ethics, law, morals, or any consequences whatsoever.

Annas could not be called a religious man. Being a devout Sadducee, he openly subscribed to the creed that there was

no such thing as life after death; nor did he believe in a spiritual world at all. He believed and taught that future rewards and punishments were absurd, and that everything passed into oblivion and ended at the grave. Typical of the Sadducees, he boasted that the theory of the resurrection was a base deceit and an utter impossibility!

Everything which Jesus taught in His great ministry of three years, in and around Jerusalem, was regarded by Annas as nothing more than abstractions of a discredited, false prophet. He had no patience with nor respect for the new, religious theories of the Master. Therefore, as may be expected, he was one of the bitterest enemies of Christ. He therefore, had a deep reason and motive, as he thought, for conspiring with his disreputable son-in-law, Caiaphas, and money-mad Judas Iscariot to speedily get rid of the Lowly Nazarene, regardless of the means to that end. Murder was commonplace with that corrupt individual, and he entertained no scruples whatever about engaging in evil enterprises if, by so doing, he could gain his point, or accomplish that which he desired.

It is noteworthy to remember that those who sold the doves and lambs in the Temple, to be used as objects for burning upon the altars of sacrifice, were the hirelings of Annas. And it was his bankers who also profited by the usurious exchange of Roman currency into the coinage of the Temple. They were there to enrich the already fat purse of their employer; and he could see no wrong nor impropriety in having them engage in such unholy practices in the Temple, for he did not consider the Temple as a place of prayer. To him it was no more than a convenient meeting place, where the crowds congregated for their religious practices, and at which the unfair exchanges would be made, to his personal benefit—and other considerations were of no concern to him!

What a sight to observe! Drove of poor Jews, trudging daily into the Temple to offer up their sacrifices, and being forced to purchase their lambs and doves, and exchange their coins, with Annas' agents—since he had a monopoly on that sordid business.

Annas, like countless thousands in Judea, had also heard

of the miracles of Jesus; especially how He brought His friend, Lazarus, back to life from a four-day-old grave! That, of course, served to greatly irritate the old man beyond description. All of His preaching and teaching that life, after death, was sheer nonsense, was now placing him in a ridiculous position before his followers. But there was no denying that such a thing had really occurred; since it was witnessed by hundreds of reputable Jews who quickly spread the news throughout the land. Indeed, in his declining years, he was forced to admit that his conclusions about the resurrection had been completely repudiated by this unknown, humble Man from Galilee. The pride and prestige of Annas was found to be on the wane. Something must be done, and quickly, to dispose of this trouble-maker whose miracles and teachings were the source of a deep-rooted embarrassment!

Then, to increase the consuming fire of enmity, word reached Annas that Jesus had on the previous Monday morning, in Jerusalem, bodily forced the money-changers and dove and lamb sellers from the Temple. To say that the old man was incensed and bitter would be to describe the situation rather mildly. He was outraged, humiliated beyond endurance, and determined to "get even" with his enemy, the Christ!

Thus, we see that the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus was considered a direct challenge to the power and authority of Annas and his group of Sadducees. They immediately determined to retaliate for the turmoil which He had created by that spectacle in the Temple. The rage of Annas caused him to burst into tears as he beheld his hirelings being chased from the Temple and into the busy streets of Jerusalem, dodging the sturdy lashes from the whip in the strong arm of Jesus!

It was shortly after this episode that Annas, with his son-in-law, Caiaphas, entered into the sordid, cheap and unholy conspiracy with Judas Iscariot to betray the Master, in the nighttime, for those thirty pieces of silver!

And where was Jesus first taken, after the unlawful arrest, outside the Garden of Gethsemane, near Jerusalem? John gives the answer:

"Then, the band and captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, which was high priest that same year."

Taking Jesus first to Annas was no mere coincidence. It had been planned that way, by the terms of the conspiracy. Having personal knowledge of the fact of the arrest of Jesus was all that Annas needed for the moment. For then, he could secretly arrange with Caiaphas, the high priest, to call a quick, nighttime meeting of the Sanhedrin, create a quorum of only twenty-three members, carefully chosen, then begin the trial of the Christ, while His friends in Jerusalem, to celebrate the Feast of the Passover, were still asleep! Thus they could terminate His ministry by condemning Him to death before His friends could learn of the tragedy! And that is exactly what they did!

Annas, devoid of principle, and with a heart black to the core, willingly connived with Judas and Caiaphas for the cold-blooded murder of the Son of God!

CAIAPHAS, THE HIGH PRIEST

Of all the men mentioned in the story of the trials and subsequent crucifixion of the Christ, it must be admitted that Caiaphas, the high priest, was the most despicable. And, in making this appraisal of him, we are not unmindful of the treachery of the great betrayer, Judas Iscariot. To be sure, the high priest was more corrupt.

For eleven years, from 25 A. D. to 36 A. D. he remained in that lofty position in Judea; and was at all times completely devoid of ethics, honor, fairness, and common decency! And his close friendship with Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, was grounded upon the proposition that they had this much in common—a deep hatred for the Christ, whose teachings they scoffed with an abiding venom. Both were political cowards—men who dreaded the thought of having their heads removed from the public trough!

As the presiding judge of the Jewish court, called the Great Sanhedrin, he was required to take a solemn oath, under the

existing Jewish laws, to at all times assume an attitude of impartiality toward every accused person brought before the court; and to manifest complete indifference as to the results of any trial therein; that he would not serve as the presiding officer should there arise a case in which there existed enmity toward the accused.

But not that fellow! Being unable to restrain himself, and hide, to some appreciable degree, his deep prejudice toward and hatred of Jesus Christ, we find him, even before the arrest was made, conspiring to murder the Christ—and seeking false witnesses to appear before the court, against the Master! And that is not the end to his corruption. Next we note that he, the presiding judge of the court, personally makes the charge against Jesus of “blasphemy,” and then has the gall to announce, in open court, that there was no need for witnesses! Then, as further evidence of his utter unfitness and complete lack of judicial temperament, he begins to tear his own garments from his shoulders to his waistband.

Matthew records how Caiaphas conducted himself as the presiding Judge of that court:

“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying: He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy! What think ye? They answered and said: He is guilty of death!”

When Jesus replied to the direct inquiry as to whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, and gave an affirmative answer, He was denounced as a blasphemer. Utterly ridiculous!

And, with the open approval of this same high priest, the members of the court, in complete disregard of existing laws, deliberately and cowardly spit into the face of Jesus, and buffeted Him; and others present smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying: “Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?”

And with all of that display of rage and temper and ill-will, the high priest was not yet contented. He can now be seen leading the bound and bleeding Christ over to the palace of Pilate, in the dire hope of obtaining a speedy approval of

their unholy and unlawful verdict that the Christ should die, because of the accusation of blasphemy! And, before the procession starts upon its journey for the second trial, they place a sharp crown of thorns upon the head of the Master and strike Him several blows upon the head, so as to insure the deep imbedding of the thorns into His precious brow. Hence, He is led to Pilate, because His eyes are by now filled with blood!

What a "judge"! What a "trial"! Somewhere, in the old Jewish law, there is this wise and true maxim: "A disreputable and corrupt judge is to be no more respected than the sweat from the blanket of a jackass!"

Indeed, Judas Iscariot betrayed his best friend for filthy silver—and in full remorse, hanged himself—but this Caiaphas committed the greater sin. He utterly and forever disgraced the high office of high priesthood through his cowardly and vile conduct as the presiding official in the supreme court of Jewry! Moreover, he became a deliberate law-violator in the following respects:

1. He knew that his heart was filled with poisonous enmity for the Master, but continued to serve and to preside at that trial, after having taken an oath that he had no such enmity toward the accused.

2. His oath to be fair and impartial was made a mockery when he admitted being a party to the corrupt conspiracy with Annas and Judas to have Jesus betrayed into the hands of His enemies, in the nighttime.

3. He raped the law when he personally preferred the charge of "blasphemy," after Jesus had merely admitted being the Son of God!

4. He winked at justice and blinded his eyes to fairness and decency when he went out in search of those "false witnesses" to testify against the accused, in his own court.

5. Being learned in the law—which was a prerequisite to his assuming the duties of that high office—he pretended ignorance of the law which required the production of two witnesses, whose testimony must be in agreement, as to all material details embracing the charge against the accused.

6. He ignored the Jewish legal mandates that no trial be had at night, nor during the feast of the Passover; or on a Friday!

7. It was he who called for the vote of the death penalty, and unlawfully recorded it, when the Jewish law, with which he was entirely familiar, prohibited the imposition of the sentence of death. The Roman conquerors had, long before, denied them such authority.

8. He painted a picture of bestiality and contempt by deliberately tearing his own robe in the courtroom, and then permitting his cowardly cohorts to spit into the face of the prisoner; to strike Him, and ridicule Him with other modes of cruelty, such as forcing into His brow that thorn-covered crown—as a symbol of Kingship.

And it was he who, before Pilate, raised the loudest voice for the release of Barrabas, and for the demand that Jesus be crucified. Still not appeased, he gave minute directions to the Roman soldiers for the commission of further acts of brutality while Jesus was prostrate and suspended on the cross!

One can easily get a mental picture of the smirking countenance of Caiaphas as the Christ begged for a few drops of water to cool the raging fever of His parched throat, and received, instead, a sponge soaked in vinegar, while awaiting for his helpless victim to give up the Spirit!

How do you suppose that the high priest really felt on that Friday afternoon, on Calvary's hill, when, standing at the foot of the cross, he heard fall from the lips of the dying Christ that sincere and fervent prayer for forgiveness—upon the premise that His murderers knew not what they were doing?

And what reaction, if any, did Caiaphas have when the earth began to quake, and the lightning began to strike, and he knew that Jesus had died—and he then heard one of the murderers, a Roman soldier, say: "*Truly this Man was the Son of God!*"?

The world will ever remember, with justified disgust and contempt, the sad spectacle of that vicious, immoral, cruel, inhuman, cowardly, prejudiced, unfit, disreputable "judge"

of the highest Jewish court who delighted in leading the frenzied mob in its base acts of brutality and cold-blooded murder!

PONTIUS PILATE, GOVERNOR OF JUDEA

Pilate was a native of Seville, one of the larger cities in Spain, wherein all of the inhabitants enjoyed the coveted privileges and rights of Roman citizens. History tells us that he was a vile traitor to the cause of the Spaniards; that when Spain fell to the greatly superior Roman warriors, his father served as a famous general on the side of the Romans. Shortly thereafter, he courted and married a woman by the name of Claudia, whose mother was the daughter of Augustus Caesar. That Pilate's mother-in-law, Julia, had theretofore intermarried with several men before taking on Tiberius Caesar; and therefore, Pilate was found to have married the step-granddaughter of the Roman Emperor. Later, because of this marriage, he was appointed procurator, or Governor, of Judea, by the then Emperor, Tiberius Caesar.

Pilate was a man of extreme violence, who frequently delighted in causing much ill-treatment and murder to many of the Jews within his jurisdiction. It is recorded that he alone was responsible for the cruel execution of hundreds of innocent Jews. Being the Governor of Judea, he had full jurisdiction over the civil, criminal and military matters within his domain; and was answerable only to the Emperor for the welfare and general behavior of the Jews located within Judea.

While he had no interest in nor love for the Jews, he feared the ever-present possibility that some of them might, with justification, report him to his political benefactor, the Emperor, and be able to obtain his removal from that high office. Many of his predecessors had been removed, summarily, for slight causes. So he kept his ear to the ground in order to detect any rumblings or outbursts of dissention over the way he conducted the affairs of State.

Once, when he had been warned that a group of Jewish citizens had planned to confer with him, making some kind of complaint over harsh treatment accorded them by him,

he deliberately had a band of his soldiers to conceal large knives under their garments; and when the helpless group came within reach, he gave the arranged signal, and they were brutally cut to death!

While Jesus was a Jew, Pilate had no reason to entertain malice toward Him. He just did not like any Jew. But, during the second "trial" of Christ, before Pilate, the Governor showed no evidence of enmity. On the contrary, he tried four separate times to release the Master by stating that he had found Him guilty of no wrongdoing. The authors of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, place a sense of mercy into the heart of Pilate, revealing his temporary unwillingness to have any part of the crucifixion. Still, we cannot overlook the important observation that Pilate, when courage and honor and bravery was at stake, showed the pallid flag of fear by vacillating and finally giving in to the demands of the mob that the Christ be surrendered to them for crucifixion.

Yes, when time came for Pilate to assume an important role in the most powerful drama in all the world, he revealed his craven cowardice. He had, indeed, the great fault of playing to the demands of the mob, and sacrificing his self-respect and power of office, through fear of retaliation. He lost control of his merciful impulses when threats to report him to the Emperor were imminent. He didn't have the moral courage to stand his ground!

We learn that, according to popular legend, the Emperor became greatly alarmed over witnessing the complete darkness which enveloped the Roman world at the moment of the crucifixion of Christ; and that he then ordered Pilate to proceed to Rome and give explanation for his conduct toward Jesus, and, as a result of this investigation, he was condemned to die as a vile murderer of innocent blood. The sting of blame, and the penalty for playing the role of a coward, cost Pilate not only his high office, but also his life!

HEROD ANTIPAS, TETRARCH OF GALILEE

? Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, Emperor of Rome. It was the latter who married ten different women, then murdered seven of them when he became bored with

their company. Moreover, Herod the Great was noted for his cruelty, and being despised by his pitiful subjects. With that kind of a father, one could not expect much from his son who followed, in many respects, the pattern set by his sire.

Herod Antipas was an individual without conscience, whose chief purpose and pastime in life was the gratification of his passions. He bore neither respect nor love for anyone. Selfishness enveloped his entire being. It was he who caused the beheading of John the Baptist because John dared expose the unholy marriage and licentious conduct of this new Emperor—to pacify the whim and fancy of Salome, whose mother had married Antipas. His lustful desires toward Salome caused him to wilfully murder the forerunner of the Lowly Nazarene.

Upon the death of Herod the Great, there was discovered a last will and testament, under the terms of which he caused the segregation of the kingdom among his three sons. Herod Antipas was rewarded with an annual bounty of many talents, and also king of the provinces of Perea and Galilee. Except for the provisions of that last will of his late father, Antipas would never have had the chance to disgrace the office of king of that domain. Because he was never the choice of even a small minority of the unhappy people whom he governed with great cruelty as a heartless tyrant!

This king of Galilee was known as an habitual drunkard. Seldom did he ever draw a sober breath. We learn that he daily consumed more than a gallon of hard wine, on the average. And there was no act too low or mean for him to do as he sought pleasure and amusement in debasement. He was despised as a common man, having an insatiable lust and greed for the nauseating things of life!

Jesus, Himself, had a contempt for the man. On one occasion, prior to His trial, the Christ was met by a group of Pharisees who immediately warned the Master that unless He immediately left Galilee, Herod would put Him to death. In a voice ringing with disgust, Jesus replied: "Go, ye, and tell that Fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected."

And this was the same Herod before whom Pilate sent the

Christ, when he learned that Jesus was of Nazareth, and would come under the jurisdiction of Herod.

One of the most effective ways to show utter contempt for another is to remain silent. And when Herod questioned—or tried to question—Jesus, we learn that, all the while, He remained completely silent!

The part played by Herod was not of much significance, respecting the trials of Jesus, so, we shall dismiss him with this comment: His greatest compliment, though undeserved, came on that day when he was placed in the immediate presence of the living Son of God!

TIBERIUS CAESAR, THE ROMAN EMPEROR

During the time of the trials of Jesus, Tiberius Caesar held the high office of Emperor of Rome. He had appointed Pontius Pilate to the office of Governor of Judea.

It is interesting to note that, under existing Roman laws, any Roman citizen, having been found guilty of any offense, in any court in that country, had the right of an appeal directly to the Emperor. We remember that the famous convert, Paul, was given this privilege after his conviction. But since Jesus of Nazareth was not a Roman citizen, he did not have this right of appeal, even if He had had the opportunity to do so, after His unlawful "trials" before the Sanhedrin and before the Roman Governor, Pilate.

The Emperor, in reality, played no significant part in those trials of the Christ; but it will be well to keep in mind that he had the unquestioned power to summarily remove from office this man, Pilate, whom he had appointed to serve in his stead as procurator or Governor. And, being a political puppet of the Emperor, we will note that Pilate was sorely afraid of his political boss in Rome, and kept constantly on guard so that he might not offend the man who was responsible for Pilate's appointment.

THE SANHEDRIN, OR HIGHEST JEWISH COURT

The Hebrew courts were divided into three separate types: The Great Sanhedrin; the Minor Sanhedrin; and the Lower Sanhedrin.

The Great Sanhedrin was the highest court of the Jews, being located in the City of Jerusalem, and consisting of seventy-one members, including the high priest, who was the presiding officer thereof.

Many of the eminent historians agree that the Great Sanhedrin had its origin back in the wilderness by Moses, who acted under divine authority. Numbers 11: 16 and 17.

"Gather unto me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers of them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand with thee; and I will take of the Spirit that is upon thee and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bearest it not alone."

Moses presided over that body of seventy elders, making seventy-one, the correct number of the Great Sanhedrin. And thus it stood until and beyond the time when Jesus was being tried.

Each member was required to possess the following qualifications before being permitted to serve:

1. He must have been a Hebrew and a lineal descendent of Hebrew parents.
2. He must have been learned in the Hebrew laws, both written and unwritten.
3. He must have been familiar with the languages of the surrounding nations.
4. He must have been modest, popular, of good appearance, and free from haughtiness.
5. He must have been pious, strong, and courageous.
6. No man was qualified to sit as judge who was concerned or interested in a matter to be adjudicated.
7. He must take an oath to be fair, and to not serve where there exists enmity between him and any prisoner brought before the court for trial.

There was a provision to the effect that twenty-three members would constitute a quorum of the Great Sanhedrin. The high priest, as the presiding judge, could lawfully assemble the court of seventy-one by securing the presence of at least twenty-three members.

Under the rules of the Mishna, a very unusual provision

was made: "A unanimous verdict of guilty, rendered on the day of the trial, had the effect of an acquittal." In other words, where the members of the court all agreed that the accused was guilty, he won his freedom!

The Hebrew law, both Talmudic and Mosaic, provided that at least two witnesses were required to convict an accused person; and at least two of the witnesses must agree in detail as to the charge made against the prisoner.

Moreover, the Hebrew law did not permit a conviction to be based upon a confession alone. There must have been supporting evidence, in addition to such a confession.

During the time of the trials of Jesus, all Judea was under strict Roman domination. But, in order to lend a bit of flattery to its Jewish subjects, in matters of religion, they were permitted to continue the operation of, and be governed by, their own religious courts, known as the Sanhedrins. And the Roman conquerors had stripped the Sanhedrin of the power to impose the penalty of death in any case tried before it. In cases where the death penalty might properly be imposed, they had to be referred to the Governor, Pilate, for approval or disapproval, before such a sentence could have any effect.

It is interesting to note, also, that when Jesus was being tried, there were no lawyers to defend those charged with crime. The judges themselves performed all of the duties of the modern-day lawyer.

Under the express provisions of the Jewish laws, the Great Sanhedrin could not try anyone either in the nighttime, or on a Friday, or during the Feast of the Passover.

Joseph of Aramathea and Nicodemus were members of the Great Sanhedrin, and the only known friends of Jesus within that body. And, as will be later shown, it was for that reason alone that, when Caiaphus, the presiding judge, assembled the court in the night, on a Friday, and during the Feast of the Passover, he did not notify those two men to be present.

It was Nicodemus who, under cover of darkness, came to Jesus, seeking the plan of eternal life; and who, after the death of the Christ, brought spices to anoint His body. That Joseph of Aramathea was the rich man who succeeded in

obtaining the consent of the Roman rulers for the body of Jesus to be buried in the personal tomb of Joseph.

In other chapters, we shall visualize the terrible spectacle of those same religious leaders, as they huddle together in a dire conspiracy to take the life of the Son of God!

THE ARROGANT SADDUCEES

The Sadducees, a religious group, who flourished during the ministry of Jesus, were the political aristocrats, and the wealthiest elements, among the Jewish society. They maintained undisputed control over local government as well as the Great Sanhedrin. Their wealth came, principally, from the commercial side of the Temple services, which involved the sale of lambs and cattle for offering of sacrifices, and the exchange of Roman for Jewish currencies, at large profits. It was Annas, their political boss, who, as a former high priest, had placed his hired agents within the Temple for those unholy purposes.

This group did not believe in the creed of future rewards and punishments; and they taught that there was no such thing as a resurrection. With them, all things ended at the grave. Hence their open animosity toward the Christ who had, on more than one occasion, actually brought the dead back to life! No credence was placed in Jesus' assurances that, after His death, He would arise on the third day. They scoffed at such a thing.

While the Sadducees were never very friendly with the opposing religious group, the Pharisees, the two were ever-ready to combine their miserable talents in any conspiracy to embarrass and humiliate the Christ—as well as the final plan to destroy Him! Enmity toward Jesus was the one, main thing which they had in common. All that Jesus was teaching, and all that He preached, ran counter to the thoughts and creed and teachings of both the Sadducees and Pharisees.

We recall that, on one occasion, when the Pharisees failed to trap Jesus into stating that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, the Sadducees sent a group from their sect for the

same purpose—to trap the Master. Here we find the Bible account of their efforts:

“Then came to Him a group of Sadducees, and asked Him: Master, Moses said, if a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife to his brother. Likewise, the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. At last the woman dies also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven, for they all had her?”

Jesus well knew that this group had ridiculed His teachings in respect to the resurrection, and that they were not in good faith in acting upon such a premise. Therefore, He said to them:

“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living!”

And when the multitudes heard this, they were greatly astonished at His doctrine. But when the Pharisees heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were no longer desirous of propounding further questions to Him.

“And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.”

Failing completely in every attempt to trap the Christ, they determined to end His mission and ministry through a scheme and conspiracy to *“seek false witnesses that they might destroy Him.”*

The raising of Lazarus back to life, from a four-day-old grave, and the chasing of the money-changers from the Temple of God, were the two outstanding acts of the Christ which made this particular group exceedingly angered with Him. Therefore, in a spirit of eagerness to retaliate, they happily joined forces with the Pharisees in the common cause of committing murder—murdering the innocent blood of Jesus!

And, it may be added, the leaders in that unholy conspiracy and cowardly alliance were the Sadducees!

THE HYPOCRITICAL PHARISEES

Tradition and custom filled a large place in the so-called "religious" life of the Pharisees. They boasted of superior knowledge and observance of the laws of Moses, according to their own interpretations, which were known as the oral laws of that day and time. They were called the "separated people," and were known to burn the proverbial midnight oil, studying and examining the ancient and musty scrolls and documents upon which were written the early Jewish laws. Therefore, they claimed to be the sole custodians of the oral laws and traditions, and demanded strict compliance of them, claiming the origin with Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Pharisees taught that fasting for long seasons, with mournful countenances, was most pleasing in the sight of God. With them it was a great sacrilege and crime for one to partake of a single meal without having first washed his hands to the elbows; and they never failed to condemn any person found to be ignoring that tradition of theirs. Of all the people ever to inhabit this earth, since the time of Adam and Eve, to the present day, there has never been a more egotistical and thoroughly hypocritical group! They were haughty, narrow-minded, overbearing, self-satisfied, and strong in the belief that they, alone, were infallible, impeccable, and better than all the rest—including the Christ!

One could easily recognize them anywhere, for they invariably wore the loudest colored, flowing robes with enormous hems, so as to attract others by their presence. Loud and long were their prayers in public places, as they sought to impress the bystanders with their pretended righteousness and false piety! Moreover, they were quick to sharply condemn and criticize all who failed to do the things which they preached and taught, but did not themselves practice. Their list contained a very limited number of things which one *must* do, but set forth hundreds of acts which were by them *con-*

demned as unlawful, and contrary to tradition and custom!

The above explains their persistence in regarding Jesus, with His great message of brotherly love and eternal salvation, as an enemy of their society and their school of thought. Their harboring of malice toward Jesus came, primarily, because of divergence of teachings and thinking. They could never approve of what Jesus had ever said or done. They would never follow His leadership, because He brushed aside, as being of no consequence, the countless, absurd traditional practices to which they clung with abiding devotion and unswerving faith.

As one checks the record of their activities, they were ever-ready to embarrass the Master, if they could, by seeking to entrap Him with questions which they never dreamed He could either explain, or prove false and absurd. But, to be sure, their pusillanimous conduct and patient hypocrisy was well known to Jesus, for He could and did read their minds. They did not fool Him with their repeated acts of great piety and pretended reverence for Godly things! So keen was His knowledge of their perfidy, that He once said of them, in their presence and hearing:

"The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses seat. All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you to observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they *say* and *do not*."

Jesus never wasted any time to argue with them concerning the superficial matter of how thoroughly one should wash his hands and arms before eating; for such was not in any manner related, even momentarily, or remotely, with the kind of religion He taught them to observe and practice.

Jesus made no effort to restrain Himself as He pointed out the absurdity of their devotion to old customs and traditions. Once He told them this:

"Ye have made the commandments of God of none effect by your traditions . . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

In other words, the Master said that they thought more of their traditions than of the commandments of God; and that, instead of teaching that one should obey God's com-

mandments, they taught that their substituted commandments, based on those traditions, were superior! With Jesus it was a matter of deciding which is more important: *human* traditions and customs or the commandments of God?

Knowing of the shallowness of their false teachings, and that their pitiful efforts at leadership were without any real substance, He expressed His disgust by telling them:

"Let them alone. They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

What a spectacle: The blind leading the blind—until both fell into a ditch! Indeed, the Lowly Nazarene seemed to delight in exposing them to their ignorant followers. Here is another pointed observation the Master made, in their presence, about their conduct:

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; and love the uppermost rooms at the feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi!"

Then listen to this courageous tongue-lashing from the Master as He points the finger of guilt into the countenances of those Pharisees:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widow's homes, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore, ye shall receive the greater condemnation. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say: Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing, but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, he is debtor.

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within, ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity!

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell!"

No one, before the era of the Christ, had dared to call the hands of the Pharisees and show them up, in the public places, for what they really were. With the Master there was no middle-ground nor compromise with false piety, hypocrisy or sin. He exposed it and He fought it wherever He found it!

And certainly the better-than-thou Pharisees were to be no exception!

The condemnation of the Pharisees by Jesus came as a consequence of their known efforts to ask Him many questions, all in the hope that, by His answers, they would be able to sustain some criminal charge in the Jewish courts, and thus terminate His great ministry.

Were the Pharisees in good faith when they sought to entrap Him into stating that it was unlawful to continue paying tribute money to Caesar? Certainly not! They hoped that a charge of sedition could be lodged against Him as a result of their inquiries.

Let us turn to the New Testament, and see what took place on the occasion in question, involving this matter of paying tribute to the Roman Emperor:

"Then went the Pharisees, and *took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk*. And they sent out unto Him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

Listen to those hypocrites, calling the Christ their "Master," and telling Him that they know He teaches the way of God in truth. Trying to play to egotism—with their bare-faced lies!

Of course, if Jesus had replied that, in His opinion, it would not be lawful nor necessary to continue paying tribute to the Emperor, Caesar, even though a vast majority of the Jews secretly felt that the requirement was unfair and unjust, they would have then charged Him with preaching a doctrine contrary to the Roman government's laws respecting the tribute money. Surely they then would be able to prove that the Christ was blocking the efforts of the Romans to collect their burdensome taxes from the Hebrews, and thus succeed in destroying Him.

But the Master was too smart for them. He readily sensed that they were not sincere in making such an inquiry; and,

perceiving their wickedness, and lack of good faith, He replied:

"Why tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money!"

Ignoring the charge that they were "hypocrites," one of the motley crew quickly produced a penny, handing it to Jesus, as He had directed.

"And He said unto them: *"Whose is this image and superscription?"* They replied: *"It is Caesar's."*

Jesus then answered them in such a manner that they could find no offense, when He said:

"Render therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

And when they had heard those words, they marvelled, and left Him, and went their way. Another pitiful attempt to trap Jesus was, like all the rest, to no avail.

While it must be admitted that the Pharisees were among the bitterest enemies of the Christ, it can also be admitted that the Christ, with full justification, had no respect of, nor love for them!

Having been truthfully accused of being hypocrites; a generation of vipers; robbers of widows' homes; blind leaders of the blind; men who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel; men who, for a pretense, make long prayer, and wear loud-colored garments to be seen of men, and serpents who cannot escape the damnation of hell—they readily co-operated with His other enemies, to the end that He might be soon destroyed—upon Calvary's cross!

THE CRUEL MOB WHICH CRUCIFIED THE CHRIST

Until one becomes familiar with the great turmoil and unrest which permeated the atmosphere in all Judea, during the greatest hours of the earthly life of Jesus, it would seem strange and hard to understand that, on Palm Sunday, the streets of Jerusalem were deeply lined with multitudes proclaiming: "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the

Lord," and to then witness, on the same streets, of that same City, on the following Friday morning, those identical voices, enveloped in hatred and anger, shouting: "Away with Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him!"

One would naturally make this inquiry: "Why the sudden and great change of attitudes? Why, in a matter of a few fleeting hours, did this throng permit hatred and ill-will to take the place of admiration and love?"

Because the enemies of Jesus had conspired to bring about just such a change in conditions in Judea. Those delirious shouts of acclamation for the Master convinced His enemies that, ere long, unless stopped, the whole world would be following Him. And then, to be sure, the Pharisees and Sadducees, with their pitiful and narrow versions of shallow, superficial creeds, would fade into the catacombs of complete oblivion—forever lost to the memory of men!

Thus we find that Caiaphas and his father-in-law, Annas, complete the deal with Judas Iscariot to betray his benefactor and friend, the Lowly Nazarene. Then they incite the people to the realization that, as Jesus had so often said, He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom—therefore, they were following the wrong course if their dreams of an earthly king were to materialize.

And so, they leave the Master all alone!

Let us now take a glance at the unruly, unholy mob, as they gloat over their captive Prisoner on that Friday morning, on the road leading up Calvary's hill:

To be sure, there was Annas, the disreputable, political boss of Judea, leaning heavily upon the arm of his corrupt son-in-law, the high priest, Caiaphas. Those two were leading the frenzied multitude to the place designated for the cruel crucifixion. Immediately behind, we see the cowardly members of the discredited Sanhedrin, chatting amid the smiles of the Sadducees and Pharisees; and ignoring, of course, the groans of the Savior as He tries, in vain, to shift the heavy burden of the rugged cross to another position upon His sore and bleeding shoulder!

Yes, they were finally headed toward Golgotha—a place of the skull—and a place hallowed by the fact that, in all the

world, since the beginning of time, nowhere else can one find better or more convincing proof of Divine love for a lost world, and humble devotion to a Father's will! Other places would appear more beautiful—but none as sacred!

And oh, what a motley crowd it was which made up the multitude, on that occasion. There they were—Jews of every size and age; priests, scribes and Levites; then the heartless Roman soldiers, being led by the coward, Pontius Pilate—the man who claimed to have washed his hands of the innocent blood. Following closely behind, we see, in a small minority, a few of His friends, their faces filled with grief and fear. Then, with greater courage, but broken hearts can be seen the disciple, John, with his arms about the shoulders of the mother of Jesus, as he tried to console that grief-stricken woman, whose eyes are filled with tears!

After Jesus falters, because of the great weight of His burden, along comes Simon, who was very probably a member of the colored race. He leans downward, as he undertakes to help the prostrate Christ back to His feet; clutches a portion of the heavy cross so as to lighten, to some degree, the awful weight which pressed against the bleeding body of Jesus. This was done without a halt, in order that the procession of evil men might continue their steady march to the place of murder!

As the crest of Calvary is reached, the Roman soldiers, under the directions of Annas and Caiaphus, begin the nailing of His hands and feet to the cross, as it is lying flat upon the ground. Then, with their brute strength, he is lifted into an upright position, between the two thieves.

But there was one character missing from the unholy scene—Judas Iscariot! He was not privileged to see the culmination of his treachery, because, by now, he is a suicide, buried in potter's field, purchased by the high priests with the same filthy silver which was used to effect the betrayal.

It might be said that, officially, the crowd was not in the trial, nor active participants in the subsequent crucifixion; but, by their presence, they became the thoughtless puppets of those unscrupulous leaders—Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate—and, therefore, they shared the guilt of what had happened.

To say the least, they rendered a disservice to Christianity, and helped place a blot of shame and disgrace upon the sordid names of those who did take active parts. Also, they willingly joined their voices with the mighty crowd who were demanding the release of Barabbas, a confessed murderer, instead of the sinless Nazarene! Blinded and inflamed by the dire echoes of their own voices, they found themselves clamoring for the innocent blood of Him who had done no wrong. Then came the consciousness of wrongdoing, for many were heard to say: "His blood be on us, and on our children!"

And while they might have then thought that they were victorious by the enactment of that drama at Calvary, they later learned, with deep regrets, that they had gone through the darkest and most dismal hours of their lives. Because the real and permanent victory was won by the Victim of their vile deeds—Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God!

This needs to be added to the picture:

Immediately after the dying Christ announced that it was finished, and He commended His precious Spirit into the hands of His Heavenly Father, there was darkness over the land for three long hours; and His Heavenly Father then took charge, causing the veil of the temple to be rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and made the earth around them quake, and the rocks to be rent—and then, one of the evil men of the mob, a Roman soldier, filled with horror and trembling, spoke for all present, and said:

"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

CHAPTER V

NEW TESTAMENT DETAILS OF EVENTS

On Thursday night, following Palm Sunday, Jesus had finished the "Last Supper" with His disciples in the upper chamber, in celebration of the great Feast of the Passover. From there we copy the New Testament account of what took place, from the time of the arrest of Jesus until the occasion when Pilate released Him to the mob to be crucified:

"He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples.

And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with His disciples.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come unto Him, went forth, and said unto them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them: I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.

As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Then asked He them again: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered: I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Then Jesus said unto Peter: Put up thy sword into the sheath. The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and the officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him.

And they led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews,

that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known to the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter: Art not thou one of this Man's disciples? He saith: I am not.

And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

They said therefore unto him: Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it and said: I am not.

One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said: Did not I see thee in the garden with Him? Peter denied again; and immediately the cock crew.

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly.

The high priest (Caiaphas) then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine. Jesus answered him: *I spake openly to the world; I even taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why ask Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying: Answereth Thou the high priest so?

Jesus answered him: *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?*

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witnesses against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At last came two false witnesses, and said: This fellow said: I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

And the high priest arose, saying unto Him: Answereth Thou nothing? What is it which these witnesses say against Thee? But Jesus held His peace.

And the high priest said unto Him: I adjure Thee by the Living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him: *"Thou has said: nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of God sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven."*

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying: He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said: He is guilty of death.

Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?

And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.

Pilate went out unto them and said: What accusations bring ye against this Man? They answered and said unto him: If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Then said Pilate: Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.

And they began to accuse Him, saying: We found this fellow perverting the Nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a king.

And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him: Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the Governor marvelled greatly.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him: Art Thou the King of Jews?

Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?

Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thine own Nation and the

chief priests have delivered Thee unto me. What hast Thou done?

Jesus answered him: My kingdom is not of this world: If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto Him: Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate said unto Him: What is truth?

When he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them: I find in Him no fault at all.

And they were the more fierce, saying: He stirreth the people, teaching throughout all Jewery, beginning from Galilee to this place.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.

Then he questioned Him with many words; but He answered him nothing.

And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them: Ye have brought this Man unto me, as One that perverteth the people; and, behold, I have examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse

Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will, therefore, chastise Him, and release Him.

The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

And they cried out all at once, saying: Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas.

Pilate said unto them: What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ: They all said unto him: Let Him be crucified.

When Pilate sat down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just Man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just Person; see ye to it.

Then answered all the people: His blood be on us, and on our children.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them: Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them: Behold the Man!

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them: Take ye Him, and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him.

The Jews answered him: We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus: Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto Him: Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee? And have power to release Thee?

Jesus answered: Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin.

And from henceforth Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying: If thou let Him go, thou are not Caesar's friend. Whosoever maketh Himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour; and he said unto the Jews; Behold your king.

But they cried out: Away with Him, away with Him. Crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar.

Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away.

And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired."

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The above record of events, now more than two thousand years old, has stood the test of time and criticism. No one, however brilliant, in all the whole world, has been able to successfully impeach that record and that testimony. And now it is the universally accepted truth, save a very few exceptions—those who, either because of training, religious teachings, or hard-headedness, refuse to believe the New Testament as being the inspired Word of God. We of the Christian faith can have no doubts respecting the authenticity of each and every word so faithfully, logically and truthfully recorded by those eye witnesses, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

CHAPTER VI

THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS WERE UNLAWFUL

A careful analysis of the New Testament narratives, respecting the so-called "trials" of Jesus, coupled with a thorough reference to and examination of the existing Jewish laws relating to criminal proceedings, should convince anyone, with an open mind, that the entire proceedings, from the moment of His arrest to the actual crucifixion, were wholly void and unlawful.

Consideration, in a judicial manner, will now be given to the numerous errors which were spitefully and illegally committed by the enemies of the Christ:

1. The arrest was without authority of law, and therefore, illegal.

2. Annas, before whom Jesus was first taken for examination, was a mere politician without jurisdiction whatsoever.

3. The Sanhedrin was unlawfully assembled for these reasons: The Hebrew laws prohibited such a meeting in the nighttime, or on a Friday, or during the great Feast of the Passover.

4. He was first accused of blasphemy, but when before Pilate, the charge was changed to sedition, without notice to the Prisoner, or anyone.

5. Jesus was denied an opportunity to obtain His witnesses who would have testified in His behalf.

6. No person could be found guilty upon his own confession of guilt, alone.

7. There must have been at least two witnesses to testify in support of the charge against the accused; and their testimony must agree as to all the material facts involved.

8. The trial could not lawfully have been concluded in a single day.

9. The Roman conquerors had long before taken from the Sanhedrin its authority to sentence anyone to suffer the death penalty.

10. A unanimous verdict of guilty rendered by the Jewish court, has the effect of an acquittal.

11. The members of the Sanhedrin were definitely disqualified to try Jesus, because of enmity toward the accused.

12. The merits of Jesus' defense were completely ignored by the Sanhedrin.

13. Pilate, as the Roman Governor, having stated four times that Jesus was not guilty of any wrong, should have released Him, instead of delivering Him over to the mob for crucifixion.

14. The condemnation of the Christ, resulting in His death on the cross, was permitted to be done without a lawful judgment of conviction.

15. The members of the Great Sanhedrin, though learned in the law, deliberately and spitefully ignored every existing Hebrew law which had been enacted for the protection of the innocent.

Rather than clutter this review with repeated source-authorities, by referring to foot-notes, which is usually rather cumbersome and certainly unattractive, the following statement is made:

All of the factual references, pertaining to the Passion of the Christ, were taken from the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; and the Acts of the Apostles.

Quotations from the several provisions of the Hebrew laws, respecting the trials of the Christ, came from and are amply supported by the following authorities:

Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy; Talmud; Mishna, etc.

Innes, "The Trial of Jesus Christ"; Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah"; Mendelsohn, "Criminal Jurisprudence of Ancient Hebrews"; Maimonides, "Sanhedrin IV"; Simon Greenleaf, "Law of Evidence"; Benny, "Criminal Code of the Jews"; Josephus, the eminent writer of the Life of Christ.

CHAPTER VII

THE ARREST WAS WITHOUT AUTHORITY

"Then the band and captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him."

Jesus had just left the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, shortly after the midnight hour, when His arrest was effected. They had no warrant, nor authority of arrest whatsoever. And the seizing and binding of the Christ was not done, as was customary, by two or three representatives of justice; for Matthew tells us this:

"Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."

The "great multitude" consisted not only of a large group of Roman soldiers, with their drawn swords and staves, but several hundred members of the Levitical police, as well as members of the Great Sanhedrin — carrying lanterns and torches clearly establishing the fact that the arrest was made at night; and they evidently thought that they might have to search for Jesus among the orchards of the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas had told them He probably would be found at that time, in prayer to His Heavenly Father.

Little did it matter to the arch traitor that he was guiding the crowd to the hallowed sanctuary of the Son of God. Nor was he the least concerned over his deliberately profaning the Passover, which, to the Jews, was the most sacred Season of the whole year! Judas had to earn his fee—had to seal the cheap bargain which he had made—in order to retain the filthy pieces of silver. And, apparently, nothing else mattered with him.

Why the large group of soldiers and the captain and officers, and others, with drawn swords and staves? Were they expecting to engage in battle? Or that the Christ would resist their efforts and flee?

After having effected the arrest, in absolute violation of law, because of the absence of a warrant therefore, they did

not even tell the Christ for what He had been apprehended, This, of necessity, was true because there had not then been preferred any charge of any kind against Jesus before the Jewish court.

Was a warrant, or some kind of written authority required, before making a lawful arrest?

When Saul of Tarsus, the great convert, was on his way to Damascus to arrest and take back to Jerusalem any Christians he might find, that he might persecute them, we note that he had to first get his authority for their arrest by applying to the high priest.

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, *went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues*, that if he found any of the way, (followers of Christ), whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

Again, in Scripture, we note this:

“I went to Damascus with the *authority and commission from the high priest.*”

Before Saul could arrest those early Christians, that they might be bound and brought to Jerusalem, for persecution, he had to first obtain the “*authority and commission*” from the high priest.

Why, then, was no authority for the arrest of Jesus issued by the high priest? Simply because none could lawfully issue until, and only until, some criminal charge had been made before the Sanhedrin. Never has there been an exception to this basic rule concerning the issuance of a writ for one's arrest. Had the Christ been seen in the act of committing some crime, then the arrest could have been made without a warrant—but, as it will be admitted, He was certainly no law-violator, and was merely leaving the Garden of Gethsemane when the Roman soldiers took Him and bound Him like a common criminal!

And their coming to apprehend Him was no surprise to Jesus. He had, several days before, related to His disciples just what would happen, and how—and even told them that they would leave Him, all alone, at the time of His arrest by

that mob of men. This was in keeping with the prophesy. So, instead of displaying any kind of resistance, Jesus quietly turned to His disciples and said:

"Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Then, like the brave Character that He was, we see Him standing erect, His countenance aglow in the moonlight, as He made the inquiry: *"Whom seek ye?"* And when they replied that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, He said: *"I am He."*

Immediately as Jesus identified Himself as the One Whom they sought, we are told that they everyone fell to the ground on their faces. This, no doubt, was the shock which came to them when conscious of being in the personal presence of the Son of God! And after a moment, regaining composure, they arose, and Jesus once more asked them the same question: *"Whom seek ye?"* And they said: *"Jesus of Nazareth."* Then the Master said: *"I have told you that I am He. If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way."*

Being completely unafraid, the Christ was perfectly willing to bear His cross, alone. Hence He requested that His disciples not be apprehended. And then what happened to those disciples?

"And they all forsook Him and fled!"

And, as we shall later note, the Christ was thereafter left all alone, in so far as humankind is concerned—but He was never left alone by His Heavenly Father, Whose will He was determined to fulfill, without counting the cost nor the pain!

As we get a mental picture of the hasty flight of those eleven disciples—the men who had been so intimately associated with Jesus for those three years of His ministry—we are reminded of a present-day truth: that the crowds will follow, like blind men, their hero in his days of great triumph, but will leave him at the first clear sign of adversity.

If the enemies of Jesus had intended to conduct a legal trial, giving unto their Prisoner all of the substantial rights guaranteed by the Hebrew laws, then there would have been some specific charge made against the Christ; and a warrant for His arrest would have issued.

But we must conclude that it was more of a capture than an arrest. It was a matter of seizing one in the nighttime for the sole purpose of doing away with him. It was the beginning of a dastardly scheme, born of a cowardly conspiracy, entered into by corrupt and evil men. Indeed, the judgment of condemnation of the Christ was agreed to long before His apprehension by the mob. Therefore, the illegal arrest, as will be seen, was the least of the many sins committed by those individuals who were referred to by Jesus as "sinful men." Truly He placed them in the right category!

CHAPTER VIII

ANNAS WAS WITHOUT JURISDICTION

Having taken the Christ into custody, they immediately led Him to the house of His bitterest enemy, Annas, who was the dominating influence over not only the Sadducees but the Sanhedrin as well—and whose son-in-law, Caiaphas, was the presiding judge.

“And led Him away to Annas first.”

Why was He taken there? In order that Annas might have personal knowledge of His arrest, so that he could then contact his disreputable son-in-law, and have him call the nighttime session of a select group of the Sanhedrin, while the friends of Jesus were still asleep.

The private examination of Jesus by old man Annas was illegal for three reasons: (1) It was conducted at night, in violation of the Hebrew laws; (2) no individual, not even a judge, had the right to question the accused judicially; (3) private examinations of anyone charged with crime were not permitted by the Hebrew law.

Here is a quotation from the Jewish law, applicable to the situation:

“An accused man shall never be subjected to private or secret examination, lest, in his perplexity, he furnish testimony against himself.”

Can it be said that Annas, who, with his five sons had served in the high office of high priest for about fifty years, was not familiar with that law, which, incidentally, had been in force for over two hundred years? Certainly he was acquainted with that and all of the other laws of the Hebrew society; but, in his desperation to be rid of the Christ, he trampled upon the law, in the hope of obtaining some kind of incriminating statement from the lips of Jesus, and thereby have some basis for the filing of criminal charges. Knowledge of the law, followed by a deliberate breach of it, is the best evidence of wilfulness!

No judge, sitting alone, could conduct an examination of the accused. The lowest Hebrew court was known as the

court of Three—consisting of three judges, who sat as a group. Moreover, we know that Annas was not a judge, but a former high priest, with no authority whatever.

The above was a wise and good law, for the full protection of anyone against whom some criminal charge had been filed. It served to protect him from making some incriminating statement, which could be used against him on the trial of his case.

When Annas had Jesus before him, we note that he inquired as to His disciples and His doctrine. And Jesus answered and said:

"I spake openly to the world; I even taught in the synagogue, and in the Temple, wither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why asketh thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

Jesus was certainly well within his legal rights to make such a reply. In effect He was merely calling attention to the fact that, without exception, His teachings were all made public, which many had heard.

It was then that one of the petty officers, in the home of Annas, violated the Hebrew law by striking the Christ in the face! And this corrupt, political boss merely smiled in approval at such unlawful conduct. And Jesus did not complain, but made this pertinent remark:

"If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

This was a perfect illustration of courage, as well as logic and truth.

Biblical history reveals that, at the times referred to herein, Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod all lived just a short distance apart from each other—hence the convenience of being in close contact with the situation, with a minimum of effort or loss of time. And the time element was to be a factor—since they were in a great hurry to have Jesus condemned before His friends became aware of His plight.

Annas was smart enough to know that, whatever might be the nature of the Kingdom which Jesus was advocating,

there would certainly be no position therein for him or his colleagues. Kings do not mix with swine!

Not being able to obtain any sort of incriminating statement from Jesus, at that secret, after-midnight examination, Annas directed the group of men to take the Christ before Capiaphas, for trial. And, far from being a trustful individual, he personally led them to the palace of the high priest. Moreover, he remained there at the palace of his son-in-law, giving directions and orders as to the proceedings before the Greater Sanhedrin. Indeed, this cheap, weather-beaten Annas was not going to miss an opportunity to supervise the cowardly "trials" of the Lowly Nazarene.

Annas had been before the selected group of the Sanhedrin but a very few moments when he began to engage in a whispered conference with Caiaphas. "Was the stage all set?" "Had any details been over-looked?" "Had Caiaphas summoned only the known enemies of Jesus?" He was demanding an affirmative answer to each inquiry! And, it must be admitted, he had no occasion to be disappointed with the answers which fell upon his obnoxious ears!

Yes, everyone was ready—even the Christ—although He was all alone; friendless, but unafraid!

Caiaphas, in considering the plight of Jesus, had said: "It is expedient for us that one man should die for his people." And by that statement he conveyed the idea that it was thought best to take the life of the Christ, for the sake of the people whom he represented.

It was ironical that Jesus, in quite a different and more reverent sense, likewise felt it was, indeed, "expedient that one Man should die for His people:"—and He would be that Man; ready to die, all alone, for a sin-cursed world, whose only redemption could be found in the precious blood of a crucified Christ

Another observation can here be made, respecting the series of unlawful acts which were done by those evil enemies of the Christ:

The Hebrew law expressly prohibited the conduction of "*any proceedings, involving a capital case, at night.*" A capi-

tal case is one wherein the penalty of death may be imposed.

We have already pointed out, beyond question, that, after the arrest of Jesus, beyond the midnight hour, He was immediately taken to Annas for the examination. Therefore, the unlawful examination was had in the nighttime, contrary to existing laws on the subject! So, we find Annas deliberately, knowingly and wilfully trampling upon the solemn laws of his own society. With men of that calibre in Judea, there is little wonder that a sense of unrest and turmoil could be observed everywhere.

CHAPTER IX

THE SANHEDRIN WAS UNLAWFULLY ASSEMBLED

The Hebrew laws were very strict in the matter of specifying the time during which a criminal, capital case, involving the penalty of death, could be lawfully tried. In no event could such a trial be heard upon either of the following:

(1) Upon a day before the Sabbath. The Sabbath was, in those days, celebrated on Saturday.

(2) During the Feast of the Passover, or any festival day.

(3) Never in the night.

"Let a capital offense be tried during the day, but suspended at night."

"They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath (Friday), nor on that of any festival."

By reference to Biblical history we know that, when Jesus was conducting His great ministry, the Jews celebrated Saturday as the Sabbath. The "eve of the Sabbath" was, therefore, on a *Friday*.

It has already been pointed out, very definitely, and beyond dispute, that Jesus was arrested shortly after the midnight hour, as He was leaving the Garden of Gethsemane; and that He was first taken before Annas, and then His trial began before the Great Sanhedrin about an hour later. The best available records show that the Sanhedrin assembled some time near two o'clock on that Friday morning.

When the members of the Great Sanhedrin assembled that court, to try the Christ, they knowingly held the session *at night, on a day before the Sabbath, and during the Feast of the Passover*. Uncounted thousands had already reached the great City of Jerusalem, to begin the celebrations. Jesus, in anticipation of the Great Feast, had, on the Thursday night before, partaken of the "last supper" with His disciples, in the upper chamber, near Jerusalem.

The Jews had what they considered a valid reason for prohibiting the trial of a capital offense at night. Here was why:

"The reason why the trial of a capital offense could not be held at night is because, as oral tradition says, the examination of such a charge is like the diagnosing of a wound—in either case a more thorough and searching examination can be made by daylight."

Moreover, it will be realized that, back in those early days, they had very little light of any kind which might be used at night. And the prohibition respecting nocturnal trials was for the benefit of any person accused of crime who, otherwise, would be subjected to appearing before the courts in virtual darkness.

One might naturally inquire: "Why did the Sanhedrin, in violation of the laws, conduct the sessions at night?"

The answer may be found in the realization that those evil-minded enemies of the Christ were afraid to try Him in the daytime. They knew that hundreds of His friends were already assembled in the City of Jerusalem to celebrate the great Feast of the Passover. Also, that, among His many friends were Joseph of Aramathea and Nicodemus—both being members of the Sanhedrin, and men of wide influence. Those two staunch friends of the Master were known as secret disciples of Jesus; and they would have most assuredly intervened in His behalf. Knowing this, Annas and Caiaphas purposely left them off the list of the twenty-three members of the Sanhedrin who were summoned to be there that night for the so-called "trial" of Jesus.

It was Nicodemus who came to Jesus, after darkness had set in, seeking to learn more of the plan of salvation and eternal life. He undoubtedly looked upon Jesus as the Son of God, for he went to no other in search of the answer to that longing of his soul. And, we recall, it was Joseph of Aramathea who, when Jesus had died on Calvary's hill, obtained permission from Pilate to bury the Christ in the personal tomb which he, Joseph, had been saving for his own use.

The Jews had been taught to never question, for a moment, any act of their high priest. He, like the kings of old, was supposedly incapable of doing a wrong! But how do you suppose they felt down in their hearts on that eve of their Sabbath, and on the great festival day of the Passover, when

they witnessed the procession following Jesus to His crucifixion—in full knowledge that their sacred laws had been ruthlessly violated by the very men whose sworn duty it was to uphold them? This is an example of the powerful influence which Annas and Caiaphas and Pilate had on the masses of the Jewish society. Already, they had broken five separate laws: the unlawful arrest; the unlawful examination by Annas; holding the session at night; on the eve of the Sabbath, and during the Passover! And we shall note that virtually every act which followed was likewise in deliberate disregard for the Jewish statutes!

When Judas Iscariot made his bargain with Annas and Caiaphas to betray the Master, it was a part of the unholy conspiracy for Judas to put the Christ into their custody at a time when Jesus' friends would be unaware of His plight. We recall Judas' statement that he "*sought to gain the opportunity whereby he would betray Jesus in the absence of the multitude.*" Those vile conspirators were rightly afraid of the multitudes who were avid followers of the Christ—until His condemnation by the Sanhedrin, when He was left friendless.

It was Caiaphas who "*sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death.*" And they planned the nighttime trials, in secret, "*lest there be an uproar of the people.*"

Under the Jewish criminal procedure the court was not permitted to adjourn its session for a longer period than a single night. Therefore, they had the wise provision that a trial must not be started in the Sanhedrin on the eve of the Sabbath. For if not concluded in a single day, it would have to be adjourned over to the Sabbath. Then, too, as will be later shown, a capital case could *not* be concluded in a single day!

Having clearly established that the trials were conducted at night and on the eve of the Sabbath, we now give brief consideration to the error of conducting them during the Feast of the Passover:

All four of the Gospel writers tell us, beyond question, that, when the Christ was tried, the Feast of Unleavened Bread had already begun, and the great Feast of the Passover,

was then at hand. Except for His arrest, Jesus would have proceeded into Jerusalem that same night, in order to be there for the Feast of the Passover. The City, as stated, was packed to capacity on that Thursday night, preparing for the Passover Feast.

Referring back to that statement of the high priest, Caia-phas, who said that they "sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death," we make this further observation:

Standard dictionaries define the word "craft" to be the same as "*deceit, slyness or trickery.*"

What a sordid and vile group of law-violators! There they were, supposedly members of a court of justice and impartiality, deliberately resorting to deceit, slyness and trickery to take human life—under the guise of legal procedure! No wonder they appeared apprehensive as to the reaction of the people, in the event they had attempted to conduct those trials like they did, but in the daytime! No wonder they decided to cover up their vile deeds while the friends of Jesus were asleep, and while the moon was hidden behind the clouds! Typical conduct of cowardly men!

CHAPTER X

CHANGING THE FALSE ACCUSATIONS

When Jesus was forcibly hailed before the Sanhedrin for "trial," we note that there had not been any charges preferred against Him. Therefore, until some kind of a criminal offense had been first made against Him, He was unlawfully required to be there. It would be just as absurd a proceeding as if a group of soldiers and citizens had captured an individual and then brought him before a criminal court to be tried when no complaint of any kind had been registered with the court!

The high priest and the scribes engaged in a brief conference, checking to determine if *their "false witnesses"* had been notified to be before the court, to testify against Jesus. Having determined that they were present, Caiaphas called upon them to make their accusations. Here is what then happened:

"At last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and build it in three days."

Such a statement as that never fell from the lips of the Christ! Here are His exact words, on that subject, as related by John:

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Those two characters, in testifying against the Master, had purposely, corruptly and deliberately perverted the true language of Jesus in order to make it appear that He had actually threatened to do physical violence to the Temple of God. Such might be expected to come from those whom the high priest himself had denominated as "false witnesses!"

Jesus was, of course, referring to His Own Body as the "temple" which they had boasted of soon destroying. He was merely saying that, in such event, He would raise His Body in three days. John gives the same explanation:

"He spake of the temple as His Body."

Regardless of the efforts to distort the words of the Christ, we find that the two witnesses were not in agreement as to their attempts to quote what each claimed to have heard

Jesus say. And so, the testimony broke down, and the false charges had to be abandoned.

Up until this time Jesus had not spoken a single word. He gave evidence of His great contempt by His majestic silence! Indeed, even the hot-headed raging of the high priest failed to extract a single expression from the mouth of their Prisoner. They were filled with consternation. How, they reasoned, would they be able to make Him talk. Then, like a flash, a clever thought was born in the warped brain of Caiaphas. He rushed from his seat, toward the body of Jesus, and, in a loud and angry tone, exclaimed:

"I adjure Thee, by the Living God, tell us, art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

That was the one question which Jesus would answer, readily, even though it would of necessity, be the affirmation of His Divinity—and His condemnation—and death. So, without a moment's hesitation, and in a clear and distinct tone, the Master replied:

"I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven."

Not only did He tell them that He was indeed the Son of the Blessed, but that, after they had taken His life—as He well knew they would—they would see Him, after the resurrection, being lifted upon clouds into Heaven where He would be seated at the right hand of His Father, God Almighty!

The admission of this great truth greatly intensified the anger of the high priest, and he began tearing his robe, while stating to the other members of the Sanhedrin: "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy! What think ye?"

Being of one accord, they replied: "He is guilty to death!"

What a trial! What a spectacle to behold! What a scene in the Jewish court, dedicated to the sacred cause of liberty and equality and justice! What an indictment could be made against such rude, preposterous outbursts of hatred and of cowardly conduct! There we see the presiding officer of the highest court of the Jews personally making the accusation of "blasphemy," and then concluding himself that the court had no need for witnesses!

What was it the members of the court heard? Only the

expression of truth—an admission by the Christ that He was the Son of God! And for having spoken the truth, they pronounced, unlawfully, the penalty of death! They knew that they had no such authority, for their Roman conquerors had stripped them of that power, years before.

They all condemned Jesus to be worthy of death! Because, as they said, He was guilty of blasphemy! Was the Christ guilty of blasphemy? An absurd inquiry! Nowhere could there be found any authority, anywhere, to make what Jesus had said the basis for such an accusation.

"Blasphemy" consists of cursing God. We have the benefit of a Biblical definition of that word, as found in the Revelations of John:

"And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacles, and them that dwell in Heaven."

The accusation of the high priest was the utterance of a frenzied and prejudiced mind, amounting to nothing more than an illiterate conclusion!

Now we observe them taking the tired and sleepy Christ, before the break of day, to the palace of Pilate, the Roman Governor. Their purpose in doing this was to get Pilate to quickly and summarily approve of the supreme penalty which they had unlawfully imposed upon Jesus. They were hoping for an informal hearing, that they might begin their execution. But the Roman Governor was not only impatient but without affection for the Jews and their numerous religious controversies. He entertained no love for them whatever, and did not wish to be bothered with their many bickerings and disputes which, he felt, they themselves should settle. As soon as Pilate learned of their presence at the palace, he met them at the entrance gate, and said:

"What accusations bring ye against this Man?"

It was then that they replied with an air of snobbery and presumption:

"If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee."

Pilate told them to "take Him and judge Him according to your law."

Quickly realizing that they could not, lawfully, condemn

one to die by the judgment of the Jewish courts, and doubting that Pilate would approve of their finding Him guilty of blasphemy, they made up an entirely new charge—without a moment's notice to the Prisoner, or anyone:

"And they began to accuse Him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the Nation, and forbidding the giving of tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King."

Jesus remained silent before the Governor of Rome. Well did He know that the charge of His having "perverted the Nation and forbidding the giving of tribute to Caesar" was false to the very core. Therefore, Pilate marvelled greatly that the Christ said not a word! Then Pilate took Jesus into the judgment hall, and said unto Him: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him:

"Sayest thou this thing thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

Pilate then wanted to know what Jesus had done. And He answered:

"My kingdom is not of this world: If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence."

Pilate soon became thoroughly convinced that Jesus had done no wrong; that the accusations made against Him were without foundation in fact, and he brought the Christ back to the high priest and his followers, and made this solemn announcement:

"I find in Him no fault at all!"

That was a verdict of acquittal—a judgment of the Roman Governor which should have effected the release of the Prisoner. And it was the one verdict which fell hard upon the ears of the bewildered enemies of the Master. Having heard it, they seemed stunned and in a quandary. Then they came forth with an entirely different accusation—this was the third—when they told Pilate this:

"He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place!"

That last charge, while entirely false, was their clever way

of telling Pilate that Jesus was from Galilee. Being a Galilean, He would have to be tried before Herod, king of Judea. So, Pilate sent Him to Herod, who was in Jerusalem at that time.

It was noteworthy that there was a decided departure from the original charge lodged against Jesus before the Sanhedrin. For the Sanhedrin found Him guilty of "blasphemy." But when He was hailed before Pilate, they changed the charge to that of treason, and then to sedition. The Christ was guilty of neither.

Let us note what took place before King Herod, the reprobate:

"And when Herod saw Jesus he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him for a long Season, because he had heard many things of Him: and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him."

Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, was still conscious of his wrongdoing in that respect, and was certainly unwilling to have his official acts, regarding the Christ, reported to his political boss, the Emperor of Rome.

Instead, then, of conducting what might be considered a serious and dignified examination of the complaints made by the Jews, Herod concluded, in his semi-drunken condition, to make sport of the Prisoner, in the hope of amusement for himself and the members of his court.

"Then he questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing."

Jesus was well acquainted with the character and reputation of this unfit king, Herod, who had, shortly before, sent a messenger to the Christ threatening to have Him killed, unless He left the country. But Jesus stood there like a brave soldier, and answered him nothing!

And that same group of His enemies stood by, vehemently accusing Jesus before the King. Through it all, the Master maintained a majestic silence, as if ignoring the proceedings completely. It is highly probable that Jesus, being well versed in the laws of that day and time, felt that Herod had no right to question Him at all.

"And Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a purple robe and sent Him back to Pilate."

Once more we see the Christ standing before Pilate. By now Jesus was enveloped in fatigue, from loss of sleep and lack of food and rest. Pilate appears irritated. He frankly tells the high priest and the others there that they have done a vain thing. Here are his words, on that occasion:

"Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will, therefore, chastise Him, and release Him."

What had Pilate just said? Once more, for the second time, he found Jesus guilty of no wrong—and reminded the mob that Herod had done nothing to Jesus. But, said Pilate, before I release Him, *I will chastise Him!* Since Pilate had said that Jesus was innocent of those charges made against Him, then for what earthly reason should the Christ be "chastised"? It was nothing less than a cowardly subterfuge. He thought that if Jesus were scourged, that would pacify the demands of those evil-hearted demons. But they were greatly dissatisfied with Pilate's decision, and showed their anger in no uncertain manner.

Still seeking some way to get from under the burden of the situation, and, at the same time, trusting that he might appease the high priest and his followers, Pilate then proposed that, since it was the custom, during the Passover Feast, to release any prisoner they desired, he said to them:

"Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him."

Here was Pilate placing the self-confessed seditionist and murderer beside the sinless Christ, and asking that wild mob which of the two they preferred to be released! Pilate had hopes, though faint, that they might have a change of heart. But not *that* crowd, for murder filled their hearts, as they remained determined to take the life of the Christ! What a

compromise to offer—what a proposal to be made by the Roman Governor to a mob of angry Jews!

"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."

Here, again, we see the scheming Annas and his common son-in-law, Caiaphas, urging the mob to call for the release of Barabbas. Release Barabbas—*so that they might destroy Jesus!* What a wild scene! What a disgraceful picture!

"The Governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?"

They said *"Barabbas!"*

Pilate, somewhat exasperated and impatient, said unto them:

"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

Why, oh, why, ask such a question! What had Jesus done? Pilate had repeatedly said He was not guilty of any wrongdoing. What he should have done with Jesus was to release Him. But he was afraid to do so—afraid of that band of Jews whose continued anger he sought to avoid.

"They all said unto him, Let Him be crucified!"

Pilate ignored the plea of his wife to *"have nothing to do with that just Man."* He called Jesus back into the inner court of the Temple, to question Him further, but Jesus remained silent, as before. Then Pilate, for the *third* time, said that he found no wrong in Jesus. Then the Jews cried out:

"Away with Him, Away with Him, crucify Him!"

Yes, it must be admitted that while Pilate sought several times to release Jesus, he just didn't have the courage of his convictions. He was, truly, a coward!

Then Pilate said to them:

"Shall I crucify your king?"

The mob, quick to respond, said *"We have no king but Caesar."*

Sensing that Pilate feared them, because of his dread that they might report him to the Emperor, placing his job in jeopardy, they hurled the defiant threat toward Pilate:

"If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."

That did it! Those last remarks placed the pallid flag of

fear into the face of Pilate, and he gave in to the demands of evil men. He deliberately ignored all sense of justice and sacrificed his self-respect to quiet the howls of a raging mob!

"Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the Governor took Jesus unto the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him."

Therefore, with no friend near who was willing to speak a single good word in His behalf; no friend there to protect Him in His legal rights, Jesus was led away by the fiendish and cruel mob, in preparation for the great ordeal—death, alone, on Calvary's cross!

This final word:

The record reflects that, through it all, the Son of God never once made a single murmur or complaint over the many insults heaped upon Him. No, not even when they crushed the crown of thorns so deeply into His precious brow that His eyes became filled with blood! Yes, He was brave enough to bear it, alone, in the true spirit of voluntary submission. He knew that He was then carrying out the will of His Heavenly Father, and fulfilling the prophesies without counting the cost nor complaining of the great pain! And the true measure of that pain and that anguish, which He silently bore, for the sins of mankind, is far, very far, beyond the pale of human imagination!

CHAPTER XI

DENIED OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN WITNESSES

After having hurled those false accusations against Jesus, they completely ignored His unquestioned right to a reasonable time within which to secure His witnesses, and thus refute what had been said, both in the Jewish court and while before Pilate.

The Christ could not have had any witnesses present before the trial began, because He had not been informed of the nature of the charges which might be made. And He was not given any *advance notice* whatever, from anyone, as to what accusations they intended making!

The very least they could have done, in such circumstances, would have been to say to Him: "If you need time to obtain Your witnesses to show the untruth of these charges against You, we will grant the request for a reasonable time to be allowed for that purpose." But, with Jesus, they had no concern for nor interest in the matters of lawful procedure, fairness and justice; for He was not given even a moment to hail before the court a host of friends, then in Jerusalem, who could and would have witnessed for Him.

We will dismiss, for the moment, the initial charge of threatening to destroy the Temple of God, because it was so ridiculous, as already pointed out, that the prejudiced judges would not, themselves, act upon such flimsy, false and absurd testimony. Jesus had been teaching and preaching for three years, out in the open spaces as well as within the synagogues and the Temple, before uncouthed thousands of men, women and little children. His doctrine was well known, for He never taught nor preached in secret! And so, there were too many people, nearby, who knew that Jesus had never threatened to do injury to God's Temple, but had plainly made reference to *His Body* and *His resurrection!*

As to the second charge—that He was the Son of God—and for which He was condemned to die, for "Blasphemy"—He could have had thousands to come forth who had been

healed, through the miraculous agency of the power of God. And, with very few exceptions, they were grateful people, eager to reaffirm the fact of His Divine Personality. They well knew that no mere prophet, nor the son of a prophet, nor any other human being, could have done the things which Jesus had done; that no human could have said the things which Jesus had said; and that no human ever led the perfectly sinless life that Jesus had led. Yes, they, by the thousands, sincerely believed Him to be what He *was*, and *Is*—the Son of the Living God!

What about the great horde of people who were the direct beneficiaries of His compassion? Immediately there comes to mind a list, consisting of these, as well as many more:

Bartimaeus, whose sight was restored; the group of paralytics; the host of lepers; the centurion of Rome, whose servant was healed merely by saying the word; the widow, whose son was brought back to life; Jairus, whose dead daughter was made to live again; the hundreds of deaf and dumb, and the halt and the lame; the poor, convulsed child; the man who was blind from birth, and was made to see; the badly crippled woman; and, finally, His good and devoted friend, Lazarus, who had been brought back to life *from a four-day-old grave!*

Many had seen the Master walk calmly upon the sea; and nine thousand men and women were miraculously fed with a mere handful of small fishes and a few loaves of barley bread.

And as a climax to such an array of reputable, trustworthy witnesses, there would have come Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, who lived only about two miles from Jerusalem, in the little village of Bethany. And would it not be quite convincing proof of His Divinity when one heard Lazarus describe the sensation of reposing, for four full days and nights, in a cold and silent grave—with a heart stilled by death—and to then be suddenly awakened and released from the throes of death, at the majestic command of the Son of God!

Consider the hundreds who were present, immediately after Jesus was baptized by John, and who heard the glorious

voice of God, penetrating from the skies of Heaven, and announcing:

"This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!"

Then call Peter, and James and John, the disciples, who were present at the great Transfiguration, and who heard, again, the soft voice of God, repeating the affirmation of Jesus being His Son!

Indeed, the Christ would not need any greater proof or better witnesses than those. Could they not have readily dispelled any possible doubt of His identity, with evidence of such supremely high quality and character?

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin—though absent during the alleged "trial," would have certainly testified that Jesus was the Son of God. He believed it so strongly that he went to the Christ, at night, seeking the assurance of his own salvation, through Jesus!

Joseph of Aramathea, a good and noble man—and another absent member of the Sanhedrin—believed sincerely that Jesus was the Son of God. So definite was his belief that, in spite of threats of the Jews, Joseph insisted that Jesus be buried in the personal tomb of this man of Aramathea! It took a man of courage to do that—one who firmly believed that the Christ was the Son of God!

Indeed, except for the rush to murder Him, Jesus could have had ample witnesses available to establish that He spoke only the *truth* when responding to the inquiry of the high priest. But when evil men have murder in their hearts, they give no thought to orderly, legal procedures, nor justice!

CHAPTER XII

NO LAWFUL CONVICTION ON CONFESSION ALONE

It has now been definitely established that the final charge against Jesus, before the Sanhedrin, and upon which He was sentenced to be crucified by the Jews, was that of "blasphemy."

We recall that, as soon as Jesus had made the truthful admission, in response to the direct inquiry of the high priest, that He was the Son of God, the proceedings in the Sanhedrin were abruptly halted by Caiaphas who, with his cohorts, adjudged the Christ guilty of the charge of blasphemy, because of His admission, and that He was then condemned to death.

Therefore, it must now be admitted that Jesus was convicted and condemned, before the Jewish court, solely upon His own confession to being the Son of God. Witnesses were not used upon either side. The Jews felt that they needed none, and they denied Jesus His right to obtain them for Him.

The records of court proceedings, in all the world, from the days of Adam to the present time, reveal that there can be found no parallel and no precedent for condemning one upon his own confession, without supporting witnesses. Civilization just would not tolerate such a practice. And, where it has happened before, it was *outside of courts*, and, in limited and isolated instances, only where mob-rule prevailed! So, then, the only exception can be found in the "trial" of Jesus before the Jewish highest court in Judea, in the year A. D. 30! And the pages of that record are so dark, and so disreputable, that, for the next almost two thousand years, none have dared to exemplify such tactics, or to use them as justification for taking human life!

What then, in defense of the Jews as a group? Did the Jewish society, in those days, when Jesus was "tried" approve of such tactics? They most assuredly did not! Let us turn to the solemn pronouncement of the Hebrew laws on that subject:

"We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence that no one can bring an accusation against himself. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation."

Note how simple and unambiguous is the above statement of Jewish law. In plain language—easily understood—admitting of no confusion, even to the simple-minded—that no one can bring an accusation against himself; that one who volunteers a confession, the same cannot be considered in court as evidence, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation!

Did they not convict and condemn Jesus upon His voluntary confession that He was the Son of God? And, did they require that the legal number of witnesses, in detail, support that confession? The answers to the inquiries are self-evident.

Let it be said, to the full credit of the early Jewish law-makers of Israel, that they did prepare and gain the approval of many ancient and sound legal principles, and rules of orderly court procedures, which, if properly and fairly administered and enforced, would have been sufficient, substantial safeguards for the protection of those charged with crime. Indeed, the protective laws were ample; but the trouble came by the haphazard and, too frequently, spiteful manner in which they were trampled upon and deliberately ignored—by the very crowd of judges who had sworn to uphold and enforce them!

Had the Christ been given the full benefit of existing Hebrew laws, as well as impartiality and fairness in the application and enforcement of them, He would never have been subjected to the series of cruelties, humiliations, and acts of brutality which were so wrongfully imposed by corrupt and unprincipled administrators. And, to be sure, it was not a matter of being ignorant of that, as well as all other laws, of the Jewish society, because we know that each member of the Sanhedrin was required to be well versed in the laws of Israel, before being permitted to accept appointment therein.

Spite, ill-will and hatred moved their hearts and minds against the Christ. Nothing else mattered with them.

Too frequently men have been known to make what appeared to be an open, free and voluntary confession of a crime which they had not committed, in order to "cover up" for some friend or relative. Then, again, there are instances where it later developed, from thorough investigation, that the crime, for which the accused "confessed," had never been committed at all, by anyone! And this is always a tragic spectacle. It is noteworthy that the principle of the Hebrew law which prohibited the confession of the accused without corroborative testimony of others, is still the law of every civilized Nation in the world. This, to say the least, bespeaks the wisdom of those early framers of the Jewish statutes, several hundred years prior to the birth of Jesus.

Having condemned Jesus to die, solely upon what may be called His "*confession*," or rather, to use a better word, His "*admission*," that He was the Christ, without the required production of the legal number of witnesses, placed the high priest, and the entire membership of the Sanhedrin, into the category of *law-violators* themselves; because they, undoubtedly, breached the solemn laws on that subject.

In the succeeding chapter, there will be a discussion respecting the legal number of witnesses which had to be produced by the prosecution before a conviction could be valid.

CHAPTER XIII

REQUIREMENT FOR TWO WITNESSES

The Hebrew laws, both Mosaic and Talmudic, insisted that there must be no less than two witnesses to testify against the accused in all criminal cases. Moreover, their testimony had to agree, in all essential facts, material to the charge preferred.

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness, he shall not be put to death."

By the language of the above quoted law, we see that, even if they had had only *one witness* to testify against Jesus—which, incidentally, they did not have—He could not be lawfully condemned to die!

Only eye witnesses were permitted to testify against the prisoner. There was no such thing, in those days, as circumstantial evidence in a criminal prosecution. Additionally, the testimony of all witnesses had to embrace all of the case—not a part by one, and another part by some other witness. Unless the witnesses could relate the details of the whole crime, their testimony was considered unworthy of belief. This was a rather harsh rule, long since departed from in modern jurisprudence, but it is evidence of a sincere determination on their part to be absolutely fair and impartial in dealing with the accused.

Before taking the stand, every witness was solemnly warned and admonished about testifying falsely against his neighbor—in keeping with the law of Moses, embraced in the Ten Commandments, received by him on Mount Sinai.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

It is of further interest to note that, under the Jewish laws, a witness was not called upon to swear that he would speak only the truth. No oath was required of him, as is now universally the rule in all courts; because the early Jews concluded that any testimony offered in their courts was submitted under the admonition of God, set forth in the above quoted ninth Commandment.

Not only did the Hebrew laws require the testimony of at least two witnesses, before a conviction could be upheld, but the competency of such witnesses was very limited. Take, for illustration, these limitations:

Women, even though eye witnesses to a crime, were never permitted to testify in any case. And notice the peculiar reasons assigned for excluding them:

"Let not the testimony of women be admitted in evidence, on account of their levity and boldness of their sex."

Such a prohibition against womanhood is unheard of in modern jurisprudence! In many States of the Union, they are now also competent to serve as Judges and jurors! Some of the ablest jurists in America, incidentally, come from the female species.

And into what common classification were women placed by the early Jewish laws? Besides women, the following were likewise incompetent to testify in any case:

"Slaves, minors, idiots, the blind, deaf mutes, userers, gamblers, illiterates, and anyone directly interested in the outcome of a case."

This Jewish "two-witness" rule was long ago abandoned; and now, in every jurisdiction of modern times, such is no longer the case; except in a very limited scope of crimes, such as: perjury, and the serious offense of treason.

Another rather strange provision of the ancient Jewish laws—very foreign to modern requirements—was that of never requiring the accused to testify in his own behalf, under oath. He, like all other witnesses in the case, was exempt from such a requirement. It will be noted, in passing, however, that, under the rules of procedure in military tribunals in this country, the members of the armed forces, when tried by court martial, cannot be forced to testify under oath!

Having definitely shown the Jewish requirement for two witnesses, who agreed in their testimony, we recall that, from the first step to the last stage of the "trials" of Jesus, including His condemnation and sentence of death, there had not been produced a single witness to support the charge of the high priest of "blasphemy." The case of the prosecution, therefore, had utterly failed! The Christ, under the law,

stood acquitted, and was entitled to an immediate judgment of "not guilty" of any offense whatsoever!

And it must be admitted that Jesus was well versed in the Hebrew laws. For, more than once, He properly challenged their right, under the laws, to treat Him as they did. Had He not been well within His legal rights, they could have forced Him to speak when He elected to remain silent! And, while they marvelled at His majestic silence, they could not condemn Him for it—because He was exercising His legal rights in such circumstances!

Summing up, in respect to the error covered by this chapter, that the two-witness rule was ignored by the Sanhedrin and Pilate, the statement is repeated, by way of emphasis, that the Christ was entitled to be released, rather than crucified. The judgment of death was a nullity from its inception. Thus, the enemies of Jesus who nailed Him to that cross were no less than murderers, because they had no legal mandate so to do, from a lawful court. And Annas and Caiaphas, and the other members of the Sanhedrin, were as guilty of that murder of the Innocent Blood as were the profane, base and cowardly Roman soldiers who had the gall to gamble for the garments of the dying Christ!

CHAPTER XIV

NO DEATH TRIAL CONCLUDED ON SAME DAY

"A criminal case, where a death sentence is to be pronounced, cannot be concluded before the following day."

It was, therefore, unlawful for the Sanhedrin to have concluded the trial of Jesus, resulting in the imposition of the penalty of death, in a single day. Long before the ministry of the Christ, the Hebrew jurists concluded that an *acquittal* of the accused may be accomplished within one day, but not in the event of a *conviction*. It was regarded as a serious matter to be called upon, in a judicial proceeding, to take human life. It was thought best to give more time for sober reflection and prayer before imposing such a verdict in a capital trial.

The Jewish law-writers, with full sanction and approval of the Jewish society, clung to the notion that at least two days should be consumed in the trial of such cases; that the judges should have a good night's rest, and have more time for a full review of the evidence, on the following day.

From the best available sources—Matthew, Mark and Luke—it has been definitely established that the so-called "trials" of Jesus—both the Hebrew and Roman—were concluded on the same day; and embracing a period of about seven hours! The first was held between one and two o'clock A. M., Friday, April 7th, and the second just about daybreak on the same fateful Friday morning! This is just another illustration of their having deliberately ignored their own laws.

In every other case, the judges would retire to their homes, after the first day of trial, and engage in prayer for Heavenly guidance, that they might not commit error while dealing with the life of a human being. Then, after serious consideration, and long searchings for the possibility of mistake in judgment, they would reassemble in the halls of the Sanhedrin, and review all that had transpired on the previous day. It was a grievous and unforgivable offense against one's

conscience as well as the good of the Jewish society for an error to be made. And they were ever cautioned, by their oath of office, to be diligent in safeguarding the paramount rights of the accused. They felt honor-bound to do no less!

But, with Jesus, it was to be different. The air of solemnity and sacredness was missing. The high honor due the judicial robes was overlooked. Instead of permitting their legal minds to ponder human rights, and human justice, and impartiality, in the discharge of their sacred duty, they could see only a "Culprit" who had dared overturn the tables of the money-changers in the Temple; and Who had repudiated their religion which taught that there was no such thing as the resurrection, by calling Lazarus back to life!

Little did they care, then, that, through the ages, millions would, after the passage of thousands of years, still discern the echo of their treachery!

But, let us note this significant fallacy:

Even if, during the "trials" of Jesus, the high priest and his cohorts had repaired to the quiet of their homes, after the first day, they would have been prohibited by the same Jewish law from returning on the next—for *that would have been the Sabbath!* They were willing, apparently, to break every existing Jewish statute, thus far, in the trials; but it would not do to vote the verdict of death on their *Sabbath!*

In attempting to pacify their insatiable demand for the life of Christ, they rushed the proceedings to a quick and tragic conclusion—typical of after-midnight, mob-violence!

When vile men have thoughts only of murder, born of hate and spite, they no longer entertain conceptions of justice, nor morals, nor law! Such were the hearts and minds of those disreputable Sanhedrinists who placed a blight and stain upon the name of "justice," and who supplanted *corruption* in the stead of *impartiality!* Their base deeds of treachery will ever be scorned and despised by honorable men and women, through the unfolding centuries, by the uncounted generations, yet unborn!

Indeed, so long as God, in His infinite wisdom, continues to give to mankind the ability to read the printed Word, as found in Holy Writ, they shall find there the sordid narra-

tion of inhuman brutality imposed upon the Christ—and, each time they read those accounts, their hearts will boil in bitter resentment over what transpired before the Sanhedrin, Herod, and the “court” of Pontius Pilate!

CHAPTER XV

DEATH PENALTY UNAUTHORIZED BY SANHEDRIN

Was it lawful for the Jews, the members of the Sanhedrin, to take the life of the Christ?

The answer must be in the negative because they had no such authority.

Judea was a province under the domination of its Roman conquerors. They were denied the power to carry into execution any sentence involving the taking of human life. The Romans did, however, permit them to *try* persons accused of offenses for which the penalty of death might be imposed; but, such a sentence must first be submitted to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, for his approval or rejection. Moreover, Pilate was required to hear the testimony and weigh the evidence which was heard by the Sanhedrin—and *then* decide what to do.

If the Sanhedrin tried a man for a capital offense, involving the infliction of the death penalty, and he was found not guilty, then that was the end of the trial. But all convictions, as stated, were required to be taken before Pilate, whose final decision was necessary before the judgment of the Sanhedrin could be put into effect.

Referring back to what transpired, during the trial of Jesus, before the Sanhedrin, we note that Caiaphas and his henchmen found Jesus guilty of "blasphemy," and pronounced the sentence of death—and, instead of complying with the Hebrew laws, on that subject, they took the Christ before Pilate, not to obtain a review of their decision, based on their conclusions that He was guilty of "blasphemy," but to get from Pilate a quick, summary approval of their unlawful acts, without even telling the Roman Governor of what Jesus had been accused and for what He had been condemned to die.

When before the Roman Governor, they were afraid to report the true facts—that Jesus had been adjudged guilty

of blasphemy, in the absence of any testimony, nor the introduction of a single witness! Instead, they told Pilate that *"If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him to you."*

Of course, they were hopeful that Pilate would not make inquiry at all as to the reasons for their condemning Jesus to die; but they were mistaken. Pilate inquired *"What evil hath He done?"* Afraid to tell the truth—apprehensive that Pilate would ridicule their judgment of condemnation, upon such an absurd charge, without evidence to support it, they quickly decided to change the accusation from that of "blasphemy" to that of sedition!

When Pilate told them to "Take Him and judge Him by your own laws," they were confounded. They knew that, under their own laws, the Christ could not, lawfully, be sentenced to die. Then came the admission that they had no authority to take a human life!

Here is the sordid and rotten thing about the proceedings: Caiaphas and Annas well knew that they had no lawful right to cause the death of Jesus—and they knew that Pilate could not, under the law, permit the Sanhedrin to take the life of Christ without a thorough investigation of the charges which they had made against Him. Still, in their determination to destroy Jesus, they cowardly resorted to subterfuge and trickery, before Pilate, by attempting to accuse Him of sedition—still in the hope that the Roman Governor would affirm their verdict of the death penalty, even though based on blasphemy!

They then saw that their plot was about to fail, so they resorted to pressure tactics, resulting in threatening to report the Roman Governor to Caesar as not being a loyal friend of the Emperor. This was the trick which caused Pilate to vacillate, and give in to the demands of the mob.

They were able to gain the custody of the Christ, but not under sanction of the laws. And from the moment Pilate delivered Him unto them, they began their plans to destroy Him.

"And they led Him away to crucify Him."

Crucified Him in the full knowledge that their acts were criminal in that they themselves violated the laws of God and the laws of their race—for neither the Jews nor God sanctioned cold-blooded murder!

CHAPTER XVI

NO UNANIMOUS DEATH SENTENCE PERMITTED .

The strangest and most unusual of all the pronouncements of the ancient Jewish laws was the requirement that, in death-penalty cases, the verdict of the Sanhedrin could *NOT* be unanimous!

Modern jurisprudence, extending back for a thousand years, has provided, in direct conflict with that odd Hebrew statute, that no man could be sentenced to die until there was first recorded a unanimous verdict. If all did not agree thereon, then a mistrial would have to be entered, and the accused would be tried a second time, at some later date.

Here is copied that rare, and now long forgotten, law on that subject:

"The unanimous verdict of guilt, in a capital case, has the effect of an acquittal."

It, therefore, follows, that, under the Jewish laws, regardless of how heinous or atrocious the offense might be, just so long as the sentence of death is sought, the accused went scot-free unless at least the vote of condemnation was not unanimous.

And there was another provision, somewhat unusual. A majority vote of at least two members was required before one could be convicted—and a majority vote of one for acquittal would result in his freedom! This, however, applied only to the Great Sanhedrin—the court in which the Christ was "tried."

The reader is now reminded that, in the time of the Christ, there was no such thing as a lawyer appearing before the court in defense of a person charged with crime. Lawyers, in that sense, and for that purpose, were unheard of, under the Hebrew system of jurisprudence. The "lawyers" and scribes were men well versed in the Mosaic laws, and would interpret them for the officers of the courts—but that was the limit of their activities. And it was mainly for that reason that the

court officers usually performed the duties of modern-day lawyers, in the Jewish courts.

Since the accused had no one to defend him, such as an advocate before the bar, it became the sworn duty of the judges to see to it that the rights of the accused were fully protected; that he had a fair and impartial trial; that no advantage was taken of him by the court; that the verdict of guilt would be based on believable and competent testimony, beyond a reasonable doubt, and to a moral certainty. So, then, the judges of the Sanhedrin were obliged to become the defenders of the prisoner! To do otherwise, they felt, would amount to *mob violence*. And the membership of the Sanhedrin certainly did not want "mob violence" to take over and control the court! *That is, not until Jesus appeared before them!*

In spite of the Hebrew laws, hereinabove quoted, we come to the question of the verdict of guilt by the Sanhedrin. Were they unanimous in their decision against the Christ?

Here is exactly what was said and done by them, on that occasion of His trial:

Immediately after the high priest had rent his clothes, saying "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? *And they ALL condemned Him to be guilty of death.*"

"All," we know, means "everyone" present. That, then, was unquestionably a unanimous verdict of guilt—and the imposition of the penalty of death! And, since it was *unanimous*, it was *in violation of the Jewish law, and void!*

How could one possibly defend those corrupt Sanhedrinists by trying to explain or to justify their unlawful acts? That they well knew the laws of their own society must be admitted—that they deliberately and spitefully ignored those laws has been abundantly shown herein—and taken from the record of the Inspired Word of God!

Immediately after Caiaphas heard the vote of his fellow-judges, then, under the law of unanimity, he would have had to announce the complete acquittal of Jesus. That is, if he had followed the law—which he was sworn to do—but, instead, with a glow of satisfaction and victory upon his sordid

countenance, he accepted it as final and legal—and then made plans to take the bound Christ before the Roman Governor for his approval! Approval of their abject rascality—approval of their rape of the laws of Jewry!

Is there little wonder, in view of what was transpiring, during those “trials,” that they conspired to have the Jewish court meet under cover of darkness, after the hour of midnight? History tells us that most all acts of foul-play, including robbery, rape and murder, happen after God’s glorious sun has gone to rest—and when darkness covers the land.

It was in the nighttime that Caiaphas and his puppets of the Sanhedrin committed this series of crimes: They robbed Jesus of His legal rights; they raped the Jewish laws, and they murdered their innocent Victim!

And, with it all, the great Compassionate Heart of the Son of God, in His dying moments on Calvary’s hill, uttered a prayer that His murderers be forgiven—*on the premise that they knew not what they were doing!*

Only the forgiving Spirit of God’s only begotten Son would have done that!

CHAPTER XVII

MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN WERE DISQUALIFIED

We come now to a consideration of the legal qualifications of the members of the Great Sanhedrin. We recall that it consisted of seventy-one members, including Caiaphas, the high priest, who was the presiding judge.

The Hebrew laws plainly set forth the calibre of men who could serve in that lofty position—the greatest in the Jewish society—by demanding the existence of certain qualities, and prohibiting service thereon where those noble qualities did not obtain. The purpose of this statute was to insure that the members of that supreme court of Judea would be at all times fair and impartial in their dealings with the accused before them. Nothing will more quickly, nor more surely, degrade the cause of justice than a corrupt, prejudiced and unprincipled jurist. Certainly it was with this thought in mind that the Hebrew law-promoters, even long before the trials of the Christ, were careful to enumerate, in no uncertain terms, the qualifications and the character of their judges, the members of the Sanhedrin.

Irrespective of the heinousness of the crime which one may commit, he is entitled, and rightly so, to have the issue of his guilt or innocence submitted to, and honestly and properly decided by, judges who are free of corruption, prejudice, bias and ill-will! This has always been universally recognized as of paramount importance to all peoples, regardless of race, religion, creed or color! When courts of justice are erected to try men for their lives or their liberties, and are solemnly dedicated to those ideals and principles, then the courts are irreparably stained and the motive prompting their erection are obliterated and held for naught, when vicious, cruel, carnal and depraved men are found occupying those high positions of trust and responsibility!

Remembering, then, the autocratic, dictatorial and deceitful attitudes so patently manifested by the Sanhedrin, in its treatment of the Christ, it will be interesting to now quote

the Hebrew laws, setting forth the definite requirements of those who would serve there:

"Nor must there be on the judicial bench either a relation, or a particular friend, or an ENEMY of either the accused or the accuser."

"Nor under any circumstances, was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among the judges."

To analyze the statute, let us make these observations:

(1) The judge could not serve if he were *"an enemy of the accused."*

Could anyone dare argue, with any degree of truth and logic, that Caiaphas, the presiding judge, was NOT an enemy of the Christ? Was it not he who, in a fit of rage and spite, boasted his plan to *seek false witnesses that he might destroy Jesus, by craft?*

Was it not he who conspired with his father-in-law, Annas and Judas Iscariot, the disciple of the Master, to betray Him, in the nighttime, when His friends would be asleep?

Was it not he who stated, before the "trial" of Jesus began, and even before He had been arrested, that *"It would be best for one man to die, to preserve the Nation!"?*

Was it not he who, in his determination to slay the Innocent Blood of Jesus, questioned the known "false witnesses" who had been procured by him, in order to condemn the Christ?

Who else but Capiaphas preferred the false and absurd accusation of "blasphemy". and then called for a vote. with the statement that there was no further need for witnesses?

And who else but he had Jesus taken before Pilate for the sole purpose of obtaining an approval of his scheme to murder the Son of God?

Whose voice was louder than Caiaphas, when the mob cried: *"Away with Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him?"*

But why continue—you are familiar with the acts of that brutal high priest!

(2) The judge must not serve if he be "related to the accuser."

Biblical history reveals, with certainty, that Annas was there—that Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was there; and that

the five sons of Annas were there—all voting against the Christ, and in favor of His condemnation.

Was Annas and his son-in-law “related?” And who made the accusation of “blasphemy” but Caiaphas, the high priest? Then was not Annas the “accuser” of the Christ?

What about the five sons of Annas, and their being “related” to the accuser, Caiaphas?

There is *ONE* qualification that none of the members of the Sanhedrin had: They most certainly were *NOT* related to the *accused—Jesus Christ!* ..

Indeed, without question, the bitterest enemies of Jesus were corralled together on that fateful Friday morning, garbed in the robes of judges of the Great Sanhedrin! Hence, the whole bunch were not only unfit, but utterly disqualified! They each had agreed to condemn and crucify Jesus several days before His midnight arrest!

Jesus had long ago read their hearts and minds—hence, in speaking to and about them, and their false creeds and hypocrisy, He said:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?”

We are reminded, again, of that ancient Jewish maxim:

“The robe of a prejudiced judge is to be no more respected than the sweat from the blanket of a jack-ass!”

This chapter is concluded, then with this statement: They were entitled to no more respect than the sweat from the blanket of a jack-ass!

CHAPTER XVIII

HIS DEFENSE WAS COMPLETELY IGNORED

The usual and orderly trial of criminal cases in all of the courts of civilization, since time immemorial, has necessarily embraced two divisions, namely:

1. The presentment of a formal charge or accusation against the prisoner, setting forth in concise and plain language the nature of the offense with which he has been so charged: and then follows the introduction of the witnesses for the prosecution to establish guilt, beyond a reasonable doubt.

2. Permitting the accused to plead either guilty or not guilty. Where the plea is "not guilty" then he is granted reasonable time within which to prepare for his defense; and he may then, upon the date set for the trial, introduce his witnesses to corroborate him in his version of what acts, if any, he may have done, and under what circumstances, so as to show justification for so doing, or that he is wholly innocent of the accusations.

Courts of justice are places where not only one, but both, sides of a controversy are heard and considered; and they must be conducted in an atmosphere of impartiality with equal justice, so as to be entirely free of secrecy, confusion, conspiracies, distrust and fear. For it is only through the assurance of fairness, impartiality and equality that justice may be ultimately attained therein. Moreover, the character or reputation of the prisoner, or the severity of the crime with which he stands charged, should never be cause to change nor to deny to him those fundamental rights prescribed by orderly, legal proceedings.

With the above brief outline of how courts are supposed to operate, it is quite difficult to conceive of the fair administration of justice when the accused is deliberately denied his unquestioned right of establishing his defense to the charges made against him. To rob one of this privilege would certainly be akin to destroying the liberties of the

citizen, and thus make him the unenviable victim of slaughter-house tactics! Surely there can be no room nor place for such evil-spirited conduct within the courts of any land—dedicated as they are to the noble cause of universal justice.

As we readily recall to memory those spiteful, repeated acts of violence which were so mercilessly perpetrated by the judges of the highest Jewish court, during the trial of Jesus, let us now take note of what the Hebrew Code required of those members of the Sanhedrin:

"The judges shall weigh the evidence in the sincerity of their conscience."

That, it will be admitted, was a laudable admonition to the judges to be fair in all their dealings with the accused. And then there was this added injunction in respect to their solemn duties while presiding in that court:

"Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently."

It immediately becomes apparent that the ancient Jewish law-writers of Israel had in mind the maintenance of a court composed of honorable judges who would deal fairly with the person charged before them. The trouble, however, came not from the absence of proper and wise and fair laws of procedure, but in consequence of placing upon the court men who were so inherently corrupt, biased and cowardly that they deliberately ignored all law while dealing with the Christ!

Could it be said, with any degree of force or logic, that a single judge of the Sanhedrin ever, during that trial of the Master, gave any evidence of an intent or purpose to *"weigh the law and testimony in the sincerity of his conscience?"*

They not only were utterly devoid of conscience, but lacked every vestige of sincerity, when Jesus was before them. Indeed, to say the least, those immoral, evil men were motivated, not by a sense of justice, but by deep-seated hatred, spleen, and a determination to kill and murder their helpless Victim—regardless of the means to that sordid end! Truly, when the putrid poison of hate abounds in the human heart, one is no longer able to think clearly nor to judge honorably and justly—regardless of law and order, rules of legal procedure, or anything else!

To be sure, they can never be successfully defended upon such a false premise that they did not know better. They were all men who were well versed in the laws of their own society; and the knowledge of the laws was a strict prerequisite to their appointment upon that Supreme Court of Israel. Had a single one of them not been well trained as to all of the laws of their country, he could never have stood the rigid test of legal learning.

But in spite of their full knowledge of the Hebrew laws, and their familiarity with what was expected of them as judges, they busy themselves, days before the trial of Jesus in a contemptible conspiracy to seek "false witnesses." And then, when their own "false witnesses" indicted their souls with corruption by relating bare-faced falsehoods, they were sood in the ridiculous position to where the same judges would not believe them, and their testimony was found wholly unworthy of belief!

Finding themselves in this plight, with its attending humiliation and embarrassment, we then see the high priest—whom the Jews had been taught could do no wrong—giving vent to his uncontrollable rage by tearing his own robe as he absurdly accused the Christ of "blasphemy", with not a single witness to support his illiterate deductions!

And while Jesus was before the Roman Governor, Pilate, the charge was then changed to "sedition", in that, as they again falsely claimed, "*He had perverted the nation by teaching that it was not lawful to pay tribute to Caesar.*"

We remember that this charge, like the first, failed miserably because no one was found who was willing to testify as a witness, before Pilate, that they had ever heard Jesus make any such statement, or teach any such thing! It was all right for them to obtain false witnesses to appear before their own court, but when they were before Pilate, they were desperately afraid to assume the role of "false witnesses."

Reverting back to those solemn admonitions to the judges: Where was their memory to "*weight the evidence in the sincerity of their conscience?*" Where, except for the voluntary admission of the Christ that He was the Son of God, was

there any *evidence* before the court? And how could they *weight* that which was not in existence?

Another pertinent inquiry:

How could they get around their solemn duty, under the previously quoted Jewish law, to "*Inquire, make search, and ask diligently?*"

We know, now, that there was no "search" made by any of them. And the only "inquiry" during the Jewish trial, came from the putrid lips of the high priest when he asked the Christ whether He was the Son of God.

There would be little occasion to now argue that the Sanhedrin would have been forced to acquit Jesus when they had heard His many witnesses; for surely they, with their vicious attitude toward Him, would have ignored them all! But, to say the least, they could have saved themselves much of the justified condemnation to which they have, for nearly two thousand years been subjected, had they given the Christ at least a chance to be supported by His witnesses, so that He could have had His day in court!

Had they followed the established rules of court procedure, set forth by their own laws, there certainly would have been no conviction of the Christ for any offense whatsoever; and His right to interpose a defense of any kind would never have been an issue to be decided then, nor to be debated now! And this is true because the Christ would have been acquitted because of the total absence of a single witness against Him.

In an earlier chapter we pointed out how easily and adequately Jesus could have produced hundreds of witnesses to establish, beyond a shadow of doubt, His Divine Personality—but that privilege was, of course, denied Him!

When Jesus told the Sanhedrin, in response to the direct inquiry of the high priest, that He was the Son of God, and they immediately adjudged Him to be guilty of "blasphemy", why did they not then produce a few more of their "false witnesses" to disprove His claim to Messiahship?

It follows that if what He had said was not the truth—then He would be guilty of blasphemy. But, we must remember

that the burden of proof was upon the Sanhedrin, and not the Christ who was on trial for His life! Neither He, nor any other prisoner, under the Hebrew laws, was ever required to establish His own guilt. That, to be sure, was the task and responsibility of the Sanhedrin—and they well knew it to be so. In the absence of proof, then, the fallacious charge of the high priest of “blasphemy” did not make it such an offense, for the law was definitely to the contrary.

Certainly it is not the purpose of the author to spend even a fleeting second in an attempt to create a defense for the Christ. He needed no defense then, and He needs none now. That absurd accusation of the high priest was no more than a wild outburst of a prejudiced heart, born in a corrupt mind which had become warped and twisted by a lust for murdering the Innocent Blood of Jesus!

Yes, without question, the defense of Jesus was completely ignored. But we are again reminded of that true adage: *“Truth crushed to the earth will rise again.”*

Jesus spoke only the truth, and nothing but the truth—but when He spoke it, they took His life, on Calvary’s cross—but, on the third day, the great stone was rolled away, by the handiwork of God, and He arose, victorious—forever!

CHAPTER XIX

FOUR TIMES PILATE FOUND JESUS NOT GUILTY

After the Sanhedrin had found Jesus guilty of "blasphemy", in the absence of any proof, and after having subjected Him to a series of humiliations, including slapping and spitting upon Him, they took the tired and sleepy Christ before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, for a review of their cowardly acts and judgment of condemnation. They had high hopes that he would give his approval in a matter of a few moments, without bothering to hear any of the details of the proceedings. It was about the break of dawn when they arrived there.

Since the Feast of the Passover had started, they were not allowed, at that Season, to enter the Praetorium of the Roman Governor, but had to halt at the entrance, until he came to meet them there.

In less than five minutes, after being aroused from his slumber, and donning his robe of high office, we note the appearance of Pilate, greeting the high priest and his father-in-law, Annas, as they stood at the gate, in close proximity to the bound Christ and the other members of the Sanhedrin. All were required to stand because no seats had been provided at the front of the Praetorium.

When Pilate mounted the rostrum, overlooking the outer balcony, he raised his arms upward, indicating his desire for silence. Then, in a clear tone and sleepy voice, he asked:

"What accusation bring ye against this Man?"

Without a moments hesitation, but being desirous to avoid too much questioning, the high priest, as the self-appointed spokesman for the group, replied, rather curtly:

"If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him upon unto thee."

Here we find the evidence of their purpose—instead of going into the details of what had transpired before the Jewish court, and running the risk of being criticized—they had the thought that what they had done to the Christ was,

in fact, of no concern to the Governor. All they desired was quick approval from him, with no comment nor argument.

Pilate, apparently, was in no mood to be disturbed at such an early hour in the morning with the bickerings of the Jews. Then, too, he did not fall for their hopes of a summary order of approval. Hence, he gave them this bit of advice:

"Take ye Him, and Judge Him according to your law."

In other words, Pilate was virtually saying to them: "Since you claim that He is a mere malefactor, and you have full jurisdiction over such petty offenses, why bother me, but go ahead and try Him yourselves, and in your own court."

The above suggestion was far from being agreeable to them. They well knew that they had already "tried" Him! Also, they knew that they had no authority, under the Roman laws, to sentence a man to die, without the Governor's approval. Being thus situated, they said:

"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

This is noteworthy, at this time: If the Governor, Pilate, had approved of their unlawful putting of the Christ to death, without another trial, they would have gladly and promptly carried out their death penalty, even though, as they confessed to Pilate, they had no such power.

Then, after a slight hesitation, they began to accuse Him of an entirely different offense than that of "blasphemy" for which He had already been, by them, convicted and condemned. Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke up in an angry tone, saying:

"We found this fellow perverting the Nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a king."

Here we note the second false charge against Jesus. He had never advocated that anyone refuse to give tribute to Caesar; and He steadfastly claimed, at all times, that His Kingdom was not of this world. So, before Pilate, we see them attempting to convey the idea that Jesus was guilty of high treason—claiming Himself the King, and forbidding others to continue paying tribute to Caesar!

We digress long enough to remind the reader of this: When His enemies sought to entrap Jesus by asking Him if it were

lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, He called for a coin, and when told that it bore the inscription of the Roman Emperor thereon, He said to them:

"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

This second charge of treason was of sufficient seriousness to warrant the Governor in making some sort of inquiry of the Prisoner. Therefore, he entered the judgment hall and called Jesus, and said unto Him:

"Art Thou the King of Jews?"

Jesus meekly but bravely replied:

"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

Pilate evidently attached little consequence to the charge that the Christ had been perverting the Nation, and forbidding the giving of tribute to the Emperor, for his question to Jesus covered only the final part of the accusation relative to His claiming to be a king. And Jesus did not answer that He had made any such pretensions at all, but He asked Pilate a question: "Is that what *you* say about Me, or is it what *others* have said about Me?"

Not getting anywhere with his questioning, Pilate resolved to make another approach:

"Am I a Jew? Thine own Nation and the chief priest have delivered Thee to me. What hast Thou done?"

Pilate was impressed with the Lowly Nazarene, with His meekness and humbleness. This, he no doubt thought, was a frame-up by a group for whom he had no particular love, and very little respect. This accounts for his reasoning with Jesus by saying that, although the high priest had delivered Him to Pilate, he really wanted to know what Jesus had done, to justify their attitude and conduct toward Him.

Jesus had nothing to hide. Once more, He explained that His mission had been misunderstood by so many, for so long; and He said to Pilate:

"My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My Kingdom not from hence."

After hearing this plain explanation that Jesus was certainly making no assertion of earthly kingship, Pilate said to Him again:

"Art Thou a King then?"

Pilate first asked the Christ if He were the King of the Jews. Now he merely inquires if Jesus is claiming to be simply a king. When he received Jesus' reply, he went out to the Jews and said unto them:

"I find in Him no fault at all."

That was the first verdict of acquittal! That was the one verdict which the enemies had hoped to never hear fall from the lips of Pilate! Having heard it, they were bewildered. Then, almost shouting, in anger, they said to Pilate:

"He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place!"

That was their clever way of telling Pilate that he was dealing with a Man of Galilee—one over Whom only Herod, the king of Judea, would have any jurisdiction. Having heard that, Pilate ordered the Christ to be taken before Herod.

After a short time spent before Herod, we observe the bound Christ being taken back to Pilate, by directions of the king of Judea. And when Pilate sees them returning to him, and getting the report that the king did not condemn Jesus, he said to them:

"Ye have brought this Man to me, as One that perverteth the people; and, behold, I have examined Him before you, and have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will, therefore, chastise Him, and release Him."

The first cowardly act of Pilate came when, in order to pacify the angry mob, he stated that he would release Jesus only after he had ordered Him whipped. Since Pilate had formally acquitted Jesus of no wrongdoing, there certainly was no reason to have Him whipped!

After Jesus had been scourged, or whipped, the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and smote His head and then put on Him a purple robe. Then Pilate comes forth and states for the *third* time:

"Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him!"

Seeing the Christ arrayed in the purple robe, and the crown of thorns imbedded deep into His brow, so much that the blood had filled His eyes, the high priest and his corrupt followers cried out:

"Crucify Him. Crucify Him!"

Pilate, fearful of what they might do to him, showed the coward's streak by saying to them:

"Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him!"

Thus, we see that on four separate occasions, during the examination of the Christ, Pilate stated that he had found in the Master no fault at all! Yet, he was willing to sacrifice principle, courage and decency and justice by telling the raging mob that they could *"take Him, and crucify Him."*

Is it not proper to make this inquiry: "Crucify Him for what?" Pilate had acquitted Him, over and over, and still he did not have the courage of his own convictions. Had he been a man of honor and fidelity, he would have defied the mob and released Jesus when the first acquittal was announced. But, he was afraid—and a coward!

There is no record, anywhere, that Jesus ever made a single murmur or complaint over the many insults and blows heaped upon Him. He was brave enough to bear it all, alone, as a friendless Sufferer, and in the true spirit of voluntary submission. Indeed, He was then carrying out the will of His Heavenly Father, and fulfilling the prophecies without counting the cost, nor complaining of the pain! And, the true measure of that great pain and anguish which He silently bore, for the sins of mankind, is far beyond the pale of human imagination!

CHAPTER XX

JUDGMENT OF CONVICTION WAS UTTERLY VOID

The Christ was condemned to die by the Sanhedrin, on the theory that He was guilty of the crime of "blasphemy," in that He had declared Himself to be the Son of God.

We have already shown, beyond any doubt, that there were no witnesses to testify against Jesus, either before the Jewish court or the Roman court of Pilate. And certainly it is clear that nothing said by Jesus when He was being examined by the Roman Governor could have been the basis for His condemnation, because Pilate, on four separate occasions, stated emphatically that he found Jesus guilty of no wrongdoing whatsoever. It follows, therefore, that, when the mob crucified Him, it was solely because of their having condemned Him when before the Sanhedrin.

Did the Sanhedrin act in keeping with the Hebrew laws when they sentenced the Master to die? If they did, then the judgment of conviction would have been lawful; otherwise, it was absolutely void.

A casual review of what transpired when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin and Pilate should forever settle the question of the validity of the sentence of death which was imposed.

Let the reader give consideration to these salient facts, concerning which there can be no dispute:

1. Jesus was unlawfully and wrongfully arrested, because they had no warrant nor authority from the high priest, or anyone else, to take Him into custody.

2. He was illegally taken before Annas for private examination. Annas was neither a judge or high priest, but a mere politician in Judea.

3. The members of the Sanhedrin were disqualified to try Jesus because of their known enmity toward the prisoner; and because they had prejudged His case long before the trial had begun.

4. The Sanhedrin had no lawful right to assemble when

they did—on a Friday; at night, and during the celebration of the Feast of the Passover.

5. The proceedings were void because, when the trial started, there had not been filed before the court any criminal charge of any kind. The accusations were made against Jesus *after the trial had been in progress*.

6. The Sanhedrin violated the Jewish laws by failing to produce the required two witnesses before a lawful conviction could be had.

7. The Sanhedrin had no jurisdiction over the Person of their Prisoner because He was brought before them without a warrant of arrest. No court acquires jurisdiction over one's person until he has been subjected to a legal arrest.

8. They failed to produce any witnesses to establish that the Christ was not the Son of God. They should have proved, beyond a reasonable doubt, and to a moral certainty, that Jesus did not speak the truth when He confessed to being the Son of God.

9. The proceedings were void for the reason that, without any notice to the Accused, the charges were repeatedly changed. He was first charged with the crime of "blasphemy," before the Sanhedrin; and later charged with treason and sedition when before the Roman Governor.

10. The conviction was illegal in that the entire proceedings against Him were *ex parte*—that is, one-sided, because they would not permit Him to call His witnesses to corroborate Him.

11. They unlawfully condemned Him to die on His Own admission that He was the Son of God. This, of course, was contrary to the Hebrew laws of evidence.

12. The Sanhedrin, contrary to the law, concluded His trial on the same day—when it must have lasted for at least two days, because it was a trial involving the penalty of death.

13. The conviction was void for the reason that He was denied His unquestioned right to set forth His defense to the charges made against Him.

14. There was a unanimous verdict of guilty, and, under the express provisions of the Hebrew laws, such a unanimous verdict amounted to an acquittal of the Accused.

15. They had no lawful right to take the Christ before Herod for trial, because there were no charges preferred against Him while He was before King Herod. And, in spite of this error, Herod did *not* condemn Jesus for any crime at all.

16. His crucifixion was the result of unlawfully condemning Him to die, when the Sanhedrin had no lawful right to condemn anyone to suffer death, unless that sentence be approved by the Roman Governor. Pilate did not approve of that void conviction, but told them to take Him and try Him by their own laws:

17. The Hebrew laws operated to acquit the Christ when He was before the Sanhedrin, and He should have been released instead of being taken before Pilate. Having proved nothing on Jesus, the Sanhedrin unlawfully took Him before the Roman Governor for the approval of their unlawful conduct.

18. Pilate tried four times to release Jesus by solemnly declaring that he did not find Him guilty of any offense whatsoever. But, in spite of this, they murdered Him upon Calvary's hill, in defiance of every Jewish law relating to criminal trials.

We will defer any elaboration on the above enumerated errors, because that will be done in a separate and concluding chapter in this review. Needless to say, however, we have definitely pointed out eighteen separate and serious law-violations which were spitefully committed by that group of evil-minded men who, in order to be rid of Jesus, were willing to stoop to murder.

CHAPTER XXI

SHADOWS OF THE CROSS WERE FAST FALLING

Jesus left the carpenter shop of His foster father, Joseph, in the little village of Nazareth, in the year A. D. 27, for the purpose of engaging in His ministry, which took Him into every sector of Israel, teaching and preaching, in search of lost men and women, that He might show them the plan for eternal life. And in carrying out the will of His Heavenly Father He soon met with violent opposition from the Sadducees and Pharisees, because of the wide difference in the things which each taught and believed.

The Jews, at that time, were wedded to the Mosaic Code which, among other things, asserted the philosophy that, in retaliation, one should have an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But Jesus sought to break the cord of such a belief by preaching and teaching that one should love his neighbor as himself—that a man should forgive his brother not seven times seven, but seventy times seven! Also, that we should only do to others that which we would have them do to us.

He had healed the lame, restored sight to the blind, and, on more than one occasion, brought the dead back to life. And the performance of those miracles brought to Him uncounted thousands of followers who willingly deserted the camps of the Sadducees and Pharisees, to enjoy the thrill of companionship with the Christ.

More than once, they had virtually demanded that He become their king—for they had long expected a Messiah who, they thought, would establish an earthly kingdom which would rival anything ever before known. But, determined to carry out the will of His Father, He declined their high offers by explaining that His Kingdom was not of this world. And His refusal to serve them in that capacity caused many of His followers to leave Him, as they went back to their former pursuits and warped beliefs. This was the break-

ing point—the crisis—in His ministry, for, ere long, He would be travelling alone.

When attention is focused upon the closing days of the ministry of Jesus, we get a mental picture of that high day in His life—His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the City which He loved with all His Heart. It was then that He would, for the first time, publicly declare His Messiahship, and, He hoped, receive the plaudits of the populace as they would acknowledge Him as such. It was to be a great hour for Him, and He had looked forward to it for many Seasons.

His entry into Jerusalem was on Palm Sunday, just four days prior to the most unfair, illegal "trials" in the history of civilization. And, instead of it being a "triumphant occasion," He soon discovered that it was to be a dark and dismal day in His earthly experiences. We see Him mount the small but strong colt of an ass, in keeping with the prophecies, as He begins His trip down the Mount of Olives, into the main thoroughfare of Jerusalem. He is greeted by a great multitude who begin spreading their garments on the ground over which He was to pass. Others cut the branches from trees nearby and strewed the roadway with them, to celebrate His coming. Then the multitudes begin to shout:

"Hosanna; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the highest!"

Then we note that the Pharisees do not appreciate this manifestation of esteem and affection for the Christ. They become jealous and worried, as they spoke thus to the Christ:

"Master, rebuke Thy disciples."

Indeed, they wanted Jesus to make the crowds desist in their shoutings of praise and prayer. But Jesus replied unto them:

"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

In other words, Jesus was telling them that this was to be His great day, and that even if He succeeded in making the multitudes become quiet, still, the stones in the streets would cry out in glorification of Him. And so, filled with bitter disappointment, the Pharisees exclaimed:

"Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him!"

Then they began to hold quickly arranged secret meetings on the streets of Jerusalem, as they laid plans to obtain "false witnesses" to testify against Him, and then they would hail Him before the Sanhedrin, after midnight, and rush His trial to conclusion, while His friends were still asleep, and in that manner, condemn Him to die on the cross. Jesus knew of their conspiracy—for He could, as we know, read the hearts and minds of men and women, as He had so often before done.

And, when the crowds saw that Jesus was not following the path which led to the palace of King Herod, and thus establish, as they had hoped for, an earthly kingdom—and that He was heading straight towards the Temple of God—then they began to leave Him, all alone!

Observing that His erstwhile followers were fast deserting Him, as He continued toward the House of God, Jesus began to weep in loud lamentation, as He prophesied the total destruction of Jerusalem! And so, after spending a short while in the Temple, He left for the village of Bethany, because He was hungry, tired and sleepy. And He wanted to spend one more evening with His beloved friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Therefore, with His twelve disciples, He repaired to that little comfortable home to spend Sunday night, when He would return to Jerusalem and the Temple the next morning.

Early on Monday morning we see Him as He enters the Temple. In a moment, He is filled with rage. There before Him is seen the hirelings of Annas, engaged in selling doves and lambs, and exchanging the Jewish coins for Roman currency—right in the center of the House of God! Taking a whip in His hands, He began to run them out into the street, saying:

"It is written: My House shall be called a House of prayer—but ye have made it a den of thieves!"

That was the last straw! Here was Jesus having the audacity to chase the money-changers from the Temple, to the great humiliation of Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas,

who had placed them there for profit. Moreover, this same Jesus had, only a few days before, brought Lazarus back to life from a four-day-old grave in Bethany, in the presence of hundreds of witnesses! All that Annas and his Sadducee friends had taught for hundreds of years—that there was no such thing as the resurrection—was now being repudiated by the Lowly Nazarene! Something must be done, thought Annas and the high priest. And so, they agreed to contact Judas Iscariot and get Him to betray Jesus, in the nighttime, so they could murder Him!

Judas Iscariot had become greatly discouraged and disillusioned. Like so many of the other followers of Jesus, he felt that, since Jesus had refused to become their earthly king, and set up a magnificent palace in Jerusalem, there was no point in his continuing to remain loyal. Moreover, he concluded, in his desperation, that it was time for him to get what he could, and as quickly as possible. Hence he became an easy mark when Annas and Caiaphas made him the proposal to betray his best Friend and Master for thirty pieces of silver. Judas was ready and willing, and therefore, the bargain was sealed and the conspiracy completed.

However, this is certainly true: They were not acting as secretly as they thought; because the Christ knew full well exactly what they had planned to do towards Him. Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us that, two days before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus spoke this to His disciples:

“Ye know that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.”

The above statement of the Master was made on Wednesday before His crucifixion the following Friday! And that, incidentally, was the same day Judas accepted the thirty pieces of silver in return for assuming the role of a betrayer. Annas and Caiaphas had arranged for Judas to meet them in the palace of the high priest for that very purpose on that same day! It was then agreed for Jesus to be apprehended after the midnight hour on the following Friday, as He would be leaving the Garden of Gethsemane.

By now, of course, it was plain to the Master that the time for the end was near for Him. In a matter of a few

hours, on this earth, His ministry would be terminated. Knowing that the shadows of the cross were falling swiftly, He needed to make final preparations for His hour of ordeal and the crucifixion on Calvary's hill.

The unceasing strife and unrest, which had been so prevalent among many of His followers and all of His enemies, during those three years of His teaching, was now beginning to show signs of increased intensity. One could feel in the very atmosphere in and around Jerusalem a sense of gloom and quiet as little groups, here and there, were heard to whisper that, ere long, the Lowly Nazarene would be nailed to a cross to die, alone!

But with the Master there was to be no compromise with truth! He was the bravest among the brave—and He knew that His Heavenly Father would sustain Him through the dark moments of anguish when, to others, it might appear that He was friendless and abandoned. Yes, He would silently submit to their insults, humiliations and physical torture—because, in the end, He would be the victor as He took His place on the right hand side of Almighty God!

It can be said that the Master went to golgotha with a broken heart. All of His efforts to seek out and save the lost had been far from successful, and He appreciated this fact to the fullest extent. It was no surprise to Him when, after the arrest, His disciples forsook Him and fled! He had already told them that they would do so! And, true to His prophesy, they gathered their garments about them and slid silently away, under the darkness, to the privacy of their homes—as they watched the Son of God being led away, bound like a common criminal, into the hands of His bitterest enemies—all alone!

With never a moment's question as to His Divinity—His being the Son of God—it would be well to keep in mind, also, His human character, as well. For one can then better appreciate the sad picture of His suffering and anguish during those last days of His mission—as He determined to carry out the will of the One Who had sent Him. We need to know that the intense pain and suffering, to which He was so brutally subjected, was *real*—that He was possessed with a human

form—made, like us, in the Image of God. Consider, for a moment, the anguish which is bound to have filled His heart on that occasion when He wept real tears over the disappointment of His reception in Jerusalem—not the silent weeping which He had done at the cold and silent grave of His beloved friend, Lazarus; but with loud and deep lamentation! And as He proceeded down the streets of Jerusalem, one could plainly see the half-dried tears resting upon His precious cheeks! The Master wept because those whom He sought to save turned a deaf ear to His pleadings that they permit Him to be their Savior and King!

What a heart-rending spectacle! The Son of God seen to weep in sadness, while those whom He tried to help and save were busy plotting His destruction; and for no earthly reason except their failure to understand the true purpose of His ministry. Indeed, His great love for humanity—including the vilest sinners—was akin to the passionate intensity of a devoted mother who nurtures and protects her helpless babes. And in return for this attitude of the Christ we note that their hearts were as hard as stone; their wills stubborn and mean, and their ears dulled by the cowardly chant of His chief enemies who preferred to slay rather than praise the Son of God.

It was the Apostle John, whose writings always thrill the hungered soul, who said of the Master:

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not!"

We have no record of how Jesus spent Tuesday and Wednesday of Passion Week, but there is every reason to believe that those days were devoted to constant prayer and meditation—and final preparation—for His trip to Calvary's hill and the cruel, rugged cross.

Thursday evening was the appointed time for Jesus to observe the Feast of the Passover, with His disciples, when every Jew would be also celebrating as a memorial to God's deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage. Therefore, the Master repaired to the "upper chamber" for the last supper—His final meal on this earth before His death—and which was a momentous re-enactment of that last night

in Egypt before the great Exodus, and was intended as a symbol of lasting gratitude for that deliverance of them.

But, there was one present at that final meal whose heart no longer knew the meaning of gratitude—for Judas Iscariot, his pocket bulging even then with the evil money for betrayal, was told by the Christ that it was he who would perform the act of treachery. Judas had the gall to pretend innocence, and to sit there and let the Christ wash his putrid feet, as though he were still a loyal follower of the Master!

Yes, this Memorial supper was to be to His followers everything that the Passover had been to Israel. It was to forever commemorate His death, without which there would have been no redemption, and so He advised His disciples:

"This do in remembrance of Me."

With the heavy burdens of a lost world pressing heavily upon Him, we see the Christ, with eleven of His disciples, proceeding to the Garden for prayer to His Father. Judas was not there because he had slipped out, to notify the murderers where He might be found.

As He reached the place in the Garden where He wanted the disciples to remain, while He went further on, He said to them:

"Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

Then, like He had done many times before, He called for Peter, James and John to go deeper into the Garden with Him, saying:

"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry ye here, and watch with Me."

For some reason, none of the disciples could remain awake, to watch, while the Christ was so deep in prayer. Three times Jesus came to check with them; and on each occasion He found them sound asleep! Finally, He awoke them, and He said:

"Sleep on now, and take your rest. It is enough, the hour is come. Behold the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

Then came forth the despicable Judas who planted the

traitor's kiss upon Jesus' cheek, as a signal for them to seize Him. And the Master was perfectly calm, as He ridiculed His ertswile disciple with this statement:

"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

And Judas, so far as the record goes, made no reply. Already he was filled with a deep consciousness of his terrible and tragic mistake, because, in a matter of hours, he had committed suicide by causing his head to dangle from the end of a sturdy rope, upon the public highway!

We remember, of course, those later events which led to the crucifixion. Indeed, from that moment forward, the shadows of the cross were falling with increased swiftness. And, through it all, Jesus Christ remained silent, meek, calm and courageous.

CHAPTER XXII

ARGUMENT ON LAW AND THE FACTS

In the days when Jesus was tried before the Jewish and the Roman courts, in Jerusalem, there was not then known the practice of having a lawyer appear in defense of those charged with crime. The witnesses were the prosecutors, while the judges examined and cross-examined the witnesses, and made the arguments either for or against the conviction of the accused.

It was not until the passage of several hundred years, after the trials of the Christ, that the court advocate, or lawyer, was permitted to represent the defendant and conduct the examination of the witnesses; and to then submit the arguments either to the presiding judge or judges, or to the jury, depending upon the type of crime involved. In petty cases, involving small infractions of the law, no jury trial was permitted. Also, when Jesus was tried, there was unknown the system of selection of a group of men to decide the issues of fact in criminal or civil cases. Therefore, Jesus was tried before the judges of the Sanhedrin, without benefit of counsel, or a jury. And this, of course, was true in respect to the trial had before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate.

Moreover, any person found guilty of an offense before the Sanhedrin could, if dissatisfied with the verdict, apply for and obtain an immediate appeal to the Emperor. The one exception, however, applied to the Jews. They could not enjoy that privilege, for it was reserved only for the Roman citizen! We recall that Saul of Tarsus, after his conviction before the Jewish courts, applied for and was granted an appeal to Caesar, because he enjoyed the rights of a Roman citizen. To say the least, that was a rather harsh and unfair rule of the law-makers of Jewish society, which they were required to create in response to the demands of their Roman conquerors. It was discrimination against a particular race who happened to be subjected to penalties such as that because they were the conquered people.

The above explanation seems in order so that the reader

will not feel that two other errors might have been committed, during the trial of the Master—that of not having counsel to represent Him; and not having had a jury to hear the evidence and decide the factual issues.

Having presented a full review of what transpired before, during and after the so-called “trials” of Jesus, in both the Jewish and Roman courts, relative to the laws then in force, and the facts brought out therein, we come now to a summation, or argument, relative to those laws and the testimony sought by the prosecution against the Christ. It shall, therefore, be the sincere purpose of the author, in this the closing chapter, to discuss those eighteen separate errors which were deliberately committed by those who were pretending to give Jesus His “trials.”

We have already cited the applicable Hebrew laws which were in force during the trials; and the manner in which He was treated has been set forth, as reflected in the true accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

It is, therefore, the fervent hope that, when this final chapter shall have been completed, there will be shown, by clear and convincing arguments, that the entire proceedings were illegal and void—from the moment of His unlawful arrest to the occasion when the Master whispered: “*It is finished!*”

The first unlawful act was, beyond the shadow of doubt, the apprehension of Jesus by the multitude which was led by Judas Iscariot, as they came forth, after the midnight hour, with their lanterns, torches and staves, and met the Christ just as He had concluded His prayers to His Heavenly Father, and was then leaving the Garden of Gethsemane.

As Judas and his mob of Roman soldiers and servants from the palace of the high priest came within speaking distance with the Christ, He inquired of whom they were seeking; and when they said “Jesus of Nazareth,” He immediately identified Himself as being that One. It was then that Judas came closer and planted the betrayer’s kiss upon the cheek of the Christ—not as the customary token of esteem and friendship, but as a signal for the soldiers and servants of Caiaphas to seize Him.

It will, of course, be noted that Judas, the man in charge of

the "multitude," stood there while they bound Him with strong cords of rope. Never once did he state to the Master, nor show to Him, any lawful commission or authority from the high priest, or any other legal power, which would have made the arrest legal. Instead of being an "arrest" it was more of a "capture," in the sense that they took Him without legal authority—but they did not have to capture the Christ, for He stood there, in silent submission to their unlawful act.

The binding of the Christ was done by the great multitude who had swords and staves and torches. The bringing of the lanterns and torches was necessary because it was in the nighttime—a point to remember in the argument. And little did it matter to that arch traitor that, in coming to the gate of the Garden to consummate his evil bargain, he was guiding the mob to the hallowed sanctuary of the Son of God. Nor was he the least concerned over his deliberate profaning the Pass-over, which, to the Jews, was the most sacred Season of the entire year!

After having effected the illegal arrest, they did not even tell Jesus for what He was being apprehended. Of course, He, in His Infinite Wisdom, did know that it was in consequence of the conspiracy to take Him by trickery and to try Him in the absence of His friends; but, the Hebrew laws made it mandatory upon the arresting officials to always inform the subject of the arrest as to the reason therefor. Judas, at the moment, no doubt felt that he was bigger than the laws of Jewry; and that, since he was now aligning himself with the high priest and Annas, no harm could possibly come to him. But, it was less than eight hours later that we find him so filled with remorse over his evil treachery that he chose to become a suicide, and was dead several hours prior to the actual crucifixion of the Christ whom he so cowardly betrayed!

Of course, as well do we know it, Jesus voluntarily submitted to His enemies whom He called "sinners." And Jesus reminded them, at the time of the arrest, that He could easily resist their pitiful efforts should He so desire; for He told them:

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and

He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of Angels?"

He did not ask for the legion of Angels because He was more than willing to do the will of His Father. He was ready to make the supreme sacrifice and thereby become the means of having the holy Scriptures fulfilled. Nothing else was of any concern to Him.

Some may inquire: "When He submitted voluntarily to the arrest, did not that make it legal?" The answer is far from difficult, because, once an act is unlawfully done, no voluntary movement by another could possibly breathe legality into it. It was illegal from the start, and remained so to the end. There can never be a moral reason nor a legal cause assigned for the unlawful arrest of Jesus.

The second wrongful and unlawful act was committed when they bound Jesus and hailed Him before Annas, the political boss of Judea. Annas, being without any judicial or ecclesiastical position within the Jewish society, has absolutely no jurisdiction over the Christ. Furthermore, the law prohibited the taking of any prisoner before any individual—even a judge—for a private examination! But, since Annas was one of the chief parties of the conspiracy between Judas and Caiaphas, he wished to have personal knowledge of the arrest, so that he might then get his son-in-law, the high priest, to call that secret, select crowd of judges of the Sanhedrin that they might "try" Jesus under cover of darkness. And as soon as they had brought the Master to the house of Annas, he got the word to the high priest to begin the unlawful assembling of the Sanhedrin.

Annas' chief motive in desiring to be rid of Jesus was based on the fact that Jesus had proved the fact of the resurrection, in spite of the contrary teachings and belief of Annas who, for some sixty years preached a creed that there was no such thing as life beyond the grave, nor future rewards and punishments.

Also, we recall that it was the hirelings of Annas who sold the lambs and doves, and were the money-changers, within the Temple of God—and that Jesus had the courage and fortitude to run them into the streets with a whip lash, as He

rightly accused them of desecrating the House of Prayer by making it a virtual den of thieves! Naturally, that made Annas furious, because no longer would he be receiving the large profits from those unholy operations, in complete defiance of the laws of God, as well as the laws of man. He felt that he had been embarrassed and humiliated by the teachings and proofs being offered by Jesus that the dogma and creed of Annas and his followers were without substance or truth.

The influence wielded by Annas upon the high priest, as well as all the others, who perpetrated those horrible crimes in dealing with Jesus, was largely responsible for the open and repeated unlawful acts. He was the brains behind the sordid plan and conspiracy to abruptly terminate the ministry of the Christ by having Him crucified on that Friday afternoon. He may not have held the hammer which drove the nails into the precious hands and feet of Jesus, but he was there to see that it was well done—as he bossed the proceedings from the first to the last stages of that horrible drama!

We shall now discuss briefly the fact that the members of the Sanhedrin were disqualified to participate in the trial of Jesus because of their known enmity toward Him.

The full membership of the Sanhedrin was seventy-one. But on the night Jesus was tried, they had purposely selected only a bare quorum of twenty-three members, practically all of whom were related to Annas, and which included the five sons and son-in-law of Annas!

We remember that the Hebrew laws forbade any member of the Sanhedrin from sitting thereon during the trial of a case where there existed enmity between any judge and the accused before the bar. Here is the exact language of the Jewish Code:

"Nor under any circumstances, was a man known to be at enmity with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among the judges."

That was a good law. It served to protect some unfortunate person from being tried before judges who were his enemies. What measure of justice could one expect to receive in such circumstances? Such a judge would, whether con-

scious of it or not, lean toward the prosecution at all events. He may not necessarily be inherently corrupt, but he would be greatly influenced by prejudice.

How about those twenty-three select members of that Sanhedrin? Were they qualified, under the above quoted Hebrew Law, to sit as judges when the Christ was on trial?

They were the very crowd who boasted of seeking "false witnesses" that they might condemn Jesus to die, even before the trial had started! They, themselves, arranged for the details of the conspiracy with Judas to the end that the Christ might be apprehended after midnight, and brought before them almost immediately thereafter, while the friends and followers of Jesus were asleep!

Are we to be surprised to read where there was not a dissenting voice raised when the high priest, Caiaphas, condemned Jesus for "blasphemy" and asked his fellow-judges how they voted? No wonder they were "*all of one accord that He was worthy of death!*" They were no more than mere tools and cowardly puppets of Annas and Caiaphas. No longer were they permitted to think for themselves; to weigh the evidence, and to vote their honest convictions on the question of the guilt or innocence of the Christ. A sad spectacle to see one becoming a "rubber stamp" and, at the same time, assume the garb of a member of the judiciary. Worse, still—they were members of the Supreme Court of Jewry! Theirs was the highest court in the land! And they disgraced the high office by their corruption and cowardice!

While it is true that Jesus submitted, as a volunteer, to their wrongful and spiteful acts, because He well knew it all was in keeping with the prophecies concerning the Son of God; yet, except for that fact, there still remains a blight on the ertswile good name of the Sanhedrin. They were acting as evil-minded men—with murder in their hearts, and hatred in their souls!

There is now assigned, as the fourth error, the proposition that the Jewish court was assembled unlawfully.

The laws prohibited the Sanhedrin from meeting on a Friday; at night, or during the celebration of the Feast of the Passover.

It was at night, between two and two-thirty o'clock after midnight on Friday when they assembled. The time had been definitely fixed as approximately that hour. That, then, was in the nighttime.

He was tried, condemned and crucified all on Friday; and certainly all have admitted, without exception, that the Feast of the Passover was then in progress. Thousands of pilgrims had filled the City of Jerusalem on the Thursday night before, prepared to celebrate that Feast.

What then do we have, relative to the unlawful assembling of the highest Jewish court? That every member wilfully, knowingly, deliberately and spitefully—with full knowledge of the laws—broke three, separate provisions of their own Code by having that session at night, on Friday and during the Passover.

Let those who, though in a very inconsequential minority, seek to justify the attitude and conduct of the members of the Sanhedrin dare challenge those three violations of the Hebrew laws! None have been able to do so, to this good day, after the passage of nearly two thousand years!

One might, with borrowed compassion, seek to forgive them for those three violations of their own laws; but, when we continue the review of the other and more serious transgressions, done with the same evil spirit and murderous intentions, we note every evidence of wilfulness and premeditation born of a corrupt design.

The creation of humane and justice-giving laws, for the high purpose of protecting the innocent, as well as insuring fairness to all accused, is one thing; but, the manner in which those beneficial statutes are applied and enforced, or ignominiously trampled upon, is quite another! Those laws of the Jews were meant to be enforced and respected. And, when Jesus was to be tried, there should have been no exception. We repeat, here, solely for the sake of emphasis: *They raped the law and ignored the evidence!*

For the fifth error, we call attention to the admitted and undisputed fact that, when Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin for "trial," no one had so much as preferred a charge of any kind against Him. The charge of "blasphemy"

made by the high priest some thirty minutes after the trial had started, was most irregular as well as illegal. If, at the beginning of the proceedings, no accusations were then pending against the Christ, then why was the Sanhedrin assembled at that hour in the night? And, with equal logic and reasoning, how could He or anyone be called on to stand "trial" for His life when no man had accused the Prisoner?

It is noteworthy that, at that dark hour of the early morning, there was no other business before the Sanhedrin. It was called into that nocturnal, secret session for only one purpose—to "try" Jesus Christ! Then, we ask, "*Try Him for what?*" The only answer can be found in the full realization that they met at that hour and place for the avowed purpose of setting into execution their dastardly scheme to rob Him of every legal right as they set into motion the corrupt machinery by which He was to be condemned to die—for no reason except that those evil-minded men had already agreed, among themselves, two days earlier, that they would murder Him!

Was not that a despicable sight to behold—twenty-three weather-beaten countenances giving off their cowardly reflections against the delicate glow of God's moonlight, as they await the arrival of the worn-out, sleepy and weary Christ—that they might subject Him to what they were pleased to call a "trial" when naught had been charged against Him! What a mockery—and what a farce—what a searing travesty upon the glorious name of justice, decency and fairness. God forbid! Except for the abject horror of it all, it would, probably have been better if the sordid record of their cheap scheming and cowardly crimes might never have been implanted among the beautiful and inspiring passages of the Word of God!

But then, we know now, that the narrations of what took place are true, and that great and good men, who witnessed the sad tragedy, were influenced by the all-powerful voice of our Heavenly Father to write on those pages what they had seen—that the thousands of generations yet unborn might see and read and understand the full measure of the price

which the Son of God voluntarily paid to redeem the sordid and bountiful sins of mankind!

When the highest court of the Jews deliberately declined to even make an effort to produce the required two witnesses to testify against Jesus as the law plainly demanded be done—it was then that they committed the sixth error of the tragic trial.

We reverently turn back the musty pages of Mosaic law, relative to the required number of witnesses for the prosecution, and we find this language:

“At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but, at the mouth of one witness, he shall not be put to death.”

Where were the “two witnesses” to establish that Jesus was guilty of “blasphemy”? The record proves that they did not have even one witness! And, even if they had had just *one* witness, the Hebrew law prohibited the taking of human life thereby. But, even without the one, they took the law into their murderous hands and applied it to suit the insatiable desires of their corrupt hearts and minds!

Finding themselves in the unhappy situation of not being able to garner any witnesses against the Master, we see the high priest, Caiaphas, wilfully disobeying the ninth commandment of God:

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

It was he, we recall, that was the only so-called witness against Jesus who absurdly accused the Christ of “blasphemy” without a word of proof to support his madcap and illiterate conclusion. It would be almost inconceivable that Caiaphas could ever sufficiently insulate himself against the flaming jaws of Hell and eternal damnation!

No character, participating in those “trials” of Jesus, is worthy of greater condemnation than the debased fiend, Caiaphas!

Jesus, Himself, measured the extent of the sin of Caiaphas when, as He was before Pilate, He referred to the high priest as the one who had delivered Jesus to the Roman Governor, and said:

"He that delivereth Me unto thee hath the greater sin!"

The mention of his name is an abomination! So, we pass on!

All courts are limited in the scope of their jurisdiction. The seventh error of law is found in the absence of jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. Until a prisoner has first been lawfully arrested, a court cannot legally acquire any jurisdiction over his person.

As we revert to the unlawful arrest of Jesus, it follows that they did not have any right to try Him until jurisdiction had been acquired in consequence of a legal apprehension.

Annas and the high priest were well aware of the conditions of that arrest. They had planned, purposely, for Him to be taken at night, without a warrant of arrest, when no charges had been filed before them. Having actual, personal knowledge of an unlawful arrest, they wrongfully took jurisdiction of the Person of the Christ. But with them it made no difference at all. They were not there to insure any safeguards for Jesus, even though the Hebrew laws so provided.

Any judgment, verdict or sentence imposed by a court devoid of jurisdiction of either the subject-matter of the inquiry, or the person of the accused, would, in law, be a nullity, and completely void. Such was the true status of the sentence and condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrin.

The eighth error is contained in the proposition that those who tried the Christ did not, in compliance of the laws, produce any witnesses to establish the fact that, as they claimed, Jesus did not speak the truth when He admitted to being the Son of God. The burden of proof was upon them to show and to establish, by the testimony and evidence, beyond a reasonable doubt, and to a moral certainty, that He was not as He had represented.

In other words, when Jesus stated that He was the Son of God, and they took the opposite view, it was then right and proper, under the law, for the members of the Jewish court to prove otherwise. If the Christ spoke the truth, He certainly could not be condemned by anyone. If, on the other hand, He did not, they alone should have introduced testimony on that issue. He was accused of "blasphemy," and

condemned for it—yet, as pointed out, they did nothing to establish His guilt!

This is just another illustration of the high-handed, evil-spirited tactics employed by the Sanhedrin membership—by judges learned in the Hebrew laws—by judges sworn to uphold those laws. Rules of evidence, when Jesus was before them, were of no consequence. To convict Him they had to deliberately ignore all existing laws, and they did so without remorse of conscience!

The changing of the charges against the accused, without notice to him, and after the so-called trial had begun, was unheard of in judicial proceedings under the Hebrew laws. Their having done that was the ninth error committed.

Looking back to the trials, we recall that the first charge against Jesus was made by the false witnesses who said that the Christ had threatened to destroy the Temple of God and raise it up again in three days. When those charges were found to be wholly untrue and absurd, they were no longer considered by the Sanhedrin. It was then that the high priest changed the charge to "blasphemy"; and, when before the Roman Governor, they again changed it to "sedition," under the false premise that Jesus had been stirring up the nation and teaching that one should no longer pay tribute to the Emperor. Then, again, while before Pilate, they accused Him of claiming to be the King! It becomes apparent, therefore, that, with no notice to the Master, they made four separate and distinct charges against Him, while the "trials" were in progress!

One would naturally conclude that, with such outlandish tactics, they were on a "fishing expedition"—that is, trying in every way and any way to make just any kind of an accusation, in the hope that, ultimately, they would be able to convince the Governor of Judea that their Prisoner had committed some offense for which He should suffer the penalty of death.

Could it be possible to imagine a more absurdly illegal proceeding than this: Suppose a man was brought into court, charged with murder. And when the proof failed, they then charged him with grand larceny; and when the proof was

found not sufficient, they then changed it to rape; and when they could not substantiate that charge, they then accused him of burglary! Immediately, anyone would say that such a thing would be manifestly unfair and unlawful. But that is exactly what they did during the trials of Jesus—except that the numerous charges were of a different nature. The principle involved would, however, be the same.

The series of charge-switching was in direct conflict with the laws of the Jewish nation, for under the Hebrew Code of procedure such action was considered intolerable and wholly without legal support.

The tenth reason assigned as error springs from the fact that the proceedings were of a one-sided nature—since the Christ was not given opportunity to corroborate His admission that He was the Son of God. We know that He could have had thousands present to testify to that truth! And to deny Him that well-settled right and privilege was just another illustration of how determined they were to destroy Him, with no regard for legal procedure, justice or fairness.

No one knew better than the members of the Sanhedrin that the Christ could have, on very short notice, summoned a host of His followers and beneficiaries of His miracles to testify that no one but the Son of God could have done such things. Being personally acquainted with a vast majority of those wonderful miracles of the Christ, they were sorely afraid to meet the issue of whether He was a Divine Being. The law gave Jesus that right, but they took it away from Him, without reason. To have afforded Him such an opportunity would have foiled their plans to kill and murder their enemy, the Son of God.

And now, we shall consider the eleventh error, which resulted from their condemnation of Jesus upon His Own admission that He was the Son of God.

The Hebrew laws plainly prohibited the imposition of the penalty of death where the only evidence was the confession, or admission, alone, of the accused. When they failed to produce a single witness against Jesus, He was entitled to an acquittal, because of that requirement of at least two witnesses, as already referred to. And, when the only evidence

before the Sanhedrin was the uncorroborated admission of the Christ, they violated their own laws by condemning Him to die!

In order to justify that verdict of being guilty of "blasphemy" the Sanhedrin had to close their eyes to this provision of the Jewish law, concerning the confession, alone, of the accused.

"A voluntary confession on his part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore, not competent to convict, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation."

Caiaphas, knowing full well, as the presiding judge of the Sanhedrin, that there was no corroboration, as above required, proceeded to shout the judgment of condemnation, irrespective of the law concerning which he was entirely familiar. And his puppets, the other "judges" of that Jewish court, were evidently afraid to voice a vote in opposition to his illiterate conclusion regarding the matter.

For the twelfth error, we cite the following law:

"A criminal case, where a death sentence is to be pronounced, cannot be concluded before the following day."

A brief discussion of this error will reveal that the trial of Jesus was concluded in a matter of a few hours—that, although, under the law, it must have been carried forward into the second day, it was *concluded before the following day*. Need more be said in respect to this assignment of error?

The Christ, after having been accused and then immediately condemned for "blasphemy," should have been permitted to offer His defense to the accusation. This, then, is the thirteenth error, because they denied Him that privilege. It was high-handed, to say the least, for the Sanhedrin to have falsely condemned the Christ, and then deliberately denied Him the right to submit His defense—proof that His admission was the truth. Apparently, they were determined to keep the proceedings as one-sided as possible—and, by violating every known law, they succeeded in so doing!

When the Sanhedrin announced their unanimous agreement to the verdict of guilty of "blasphemy," they did so in the face of the solemn Jewish laws to the contrary. The

Hebrew Code, as we recall, provided that a unanimous verdict against the accused would amount to an acquittal of him. Jesus, then, was, as a matter of their law, entitled to His immediate release when the twenty-three members of the Sanhedrin voted in approval of the condemnation announced by the high priest. This, to be sure, was the fourteenth error of the "trials"!

The fifteenth error was committed when the Sanhedrinists, by the directions of Pilate, took Jesus before King Herod. That man had no jurisdiction whatsoever. For, at that stage of the proceedings there had been no lawful charge preferred against the Master—and, therefore, there was nothing for Herod to consider or decide. That is the main reason why Herod, without condemning Jesus, sent Him back to Pilate. They had no reason for taking Jesus there, except in the hope that Herod, who had previously threatened to kill Jesus, might direct His execution, since it was then doubtful that Pilate would do so!

Since the Jewish court had no authority to execute anyone—because that power had long ago been taken away from them by their Roman conquerors—they did condemn Jesus to die, and did crucify Him, at a time when the Roman Governor had not approved such a sentence. That was the sixteenth error committed by those evil men of the Sanhedrin. If they had had the authority, under the law, to take the life of Jesus—which Caiaphas, before Pilate, admitted they did not have—then there would have been no point in delaying His execution by taking Him before the Roman Governor.

By several of the previously assigned errors, the Sanhedrin wrongfully condemned Jesus, without lawful authority. That being the case, they committed the seventeenth error by taking Him before the Roman Governor to approve of what their own laws declared to be illegal and void. In other words, having unlawfully sentenced the Christ to die, in the complete absence of witnesses or proof, there was nothing for Pilate to do, by way of approving or disapproving what the Sanhedrin had done. Knowing that their acts were illegal, unlawful and void, they endeavored to shift the responsibility to the shoulders of the Roman Governor. They wanted him to give

the official orders for the execution of Jesus, since they could not do so themselves.

And now, for the eighteenth, and final error, we submit the following:

Except for the trial of Jesus, it was undoubtedly unheard of for a judge to find a man not guilty and then deliver him over for execution. But that is what Pilate did with the Master. Four separate times he declared that he had found Jesus guilty of nothing wrong. Four times he solemnly, publicly declared that Jesus was innocent. But in spite of those conclusions, he cowardly, unlawfully and illegally delivered Jesus to the mob to be crucified. The members of the Sanhedrin spitefully and wilfully ignored every known Jewish law in their efforts to take His life—and then, as a climax, they took the Christ and crucified Him after having heard the Roman Governor acquit Him four separate times! To say the least, their acts were cold-blooded murder!

Having completed the argument on the illegal phases of the Jewish and Roman trials of Jesus, as they related to the existing Hebrew laws, attention will now be directed toward the actual facts which were involved therein.

We know that, after His illegal arrest, He was first taken before Annas, who was the "power behind the throne", in so far as the high priesthood was concerned. The Judean political boss undertook to make inquiry of Jesus as to His disciples and His teachings. But the Master remained silent, which was His legal right to do. But, when Annas persisted in trying to learn of His doctrines, he received this sort of reply:

"I have spoken openly to the world, I even taught in the synagogues and in the Temple, where all the Jews customarily congregate. In secret, I spoke nothing! Why askest thou Me? Ask them that have heard Me, what I spake unto them."

Jesus was merely stating that He had never spoken anywhere in secret; and that all of His doctrines had been expounded in the public places of worship. And, if a check on His creed was desired, just ask those who had heard Him! That was a logical statement, but it irritated Annas to no small degree. He saw that he was getting nowhere with his unlawful examination.

Then came the first act of physical violence. One of the servants of Annas, realizing that Jesus had put Annas in a ridiculous light, reached over and struck the Christ an insulting blow in the face! Then the servant inquired of the Master:

"Answerest Thou the high priest thus?"

That illiterate, servile laborer of the house of Annas was of the false impression that his boss was *still* the "high priest". No doubt Annas, himself, made them think so, because of his dictatorial handling of that office for so long—as well as his domination over the *real* high priest, Annas' corrupt son-in-law, Caiaphas!

Such an outburst of temper should have called for immediate dismissal of the servant, but Annas, according to records, made no complaint about this outrage. Then, after silently submitting to the coward's blow, Jesus said:

"If I have spoken evil, bear witness to the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?"

The Christ was well versed in Hebrew laws—no doubt about it. Here He was telling them if He had spoken improperly, then be a witness to it; but, otherwise, why do you strike Me?

Neither Annas nor anyone else could reply to that inquiry of Jesus. So, to save further embarrassment, Annas directed that the Christ be taken before the Sanhedrin—which, by now, was in the process of unlawfully assembling, with a bare quorum of twenty-three, carefully selected members, in keeping with their conspiracy. They would be ready, for their minds had been made up for some time.

We will note that the first blow upon the Body of Jesus by the common servant of Annas was only the start of the series of brutalities which were to be inflicted. As the Master had said, He was now in the hands of sinful men.

To make sure that there would be no slip-up or delay in the proceedings, Annas leads the unholy procession through the dark streets of Jerusalem to the Sanhedrin, presided over by his son-in-law, Caiaphas. The distance travelled was about two blocks from the home of Annas.

We recall how they attempted to use the testimony of their

own "false witnesses", and that their statements were completely discredited as being unworthy of belief. Then, in a spirit of desperation, the high priest, visibly affected by the calmness and unconcern of the Master, left his seat and ran toward Jesus, his voice filled with anger and hatred, and said:

"I adjure Thee by the living God, tell us, art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"

Until now Jesus had maintained silence—no doubt in contempt for their unlawful and high-handed tactics. But now He certainly must speak out. He must reaffirm that which He had so often told the people—that He was the Son of God! He knew, of course, that to claim equality with God, if untrue, would be blasphemy. Therefore, in a voice ringing with clarity, He admitted Sonship with His Heavenly Father by giving the high priest this answer:

"I am. And Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven."

Without a moments hesitation, Caiaphas, the high priest, began to rip his own robe almost into shreds. Then in a loud voice he said:

"He hath spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? What think ye?"

And, being of one accord, they all condemned Him to be liable to death!

But they did not impose the sentence at that time, because, under the Roman laws, such a sentence had to first be submitted to and approved by the Roman Governor, Pilate.

Before leaving for the Praetorium of Pilate they arose against Him in a great rebellion, and began to hurl insult after insult, and blow after blow with intensified coarseness and ferocity. It was, beyond doubt, the most disgraceful spectacle ever witnessed in any court in all the world. Take a glance at what transpired—in the very center of the Supreme Court of Jewry—the highest court within the Jewish society.

"Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands. And they covered His face, and said: Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?"

What a court! What a group of judges of the Sanhedrin! What a picture to be painted for the peoples of the world to see until the end of time!

But there stood Jesus—silently submissive. Not defenseless, but merely undefending; not helpless, in the sense that He was forced to take their harsh punishment and insults, but uncontending. His silent, voluntary submission was majestic evidence of a Son's devotion to His Father's will!

Why did they conduct themselves on that occasion like wild, depraved culprits? Because even before they had met, on that Friday morning, they had but a single thought and purpose; not to give the Christ a legal trial, but to conduct a hurried, judicial murder! The Master was already convicted, even before the lamp-lights of the courtroom were lit. They were there only to determine how the informal, unlawful sentence of death might be put into effect.

If they had had the power to kill the Christ they would never have taken Him before Pilate. He was taken there to get Pilate's approval of their murderous deed; but when before the Governor they knew that he would ridicule them for having sentenced Jesus to suffer the supreme penalty of death, without any semblance of proof of any wrongdoing. Therefore, they changed the accusation from "blasphemy" to that of sedition by claiming the Christ advocated disloyalty to the Roman Emperor by teaching that it was unlawful to continue paying tribute to Caesar, and by claiming to be a king!

Why did they stop at the gate of the Praetorium of Pilate? Because under their religious beliefs it would have been an act of defilement to have entered that building during the Feast of the Passover. It was alright to commit murder during that great Feast—but do not become defiled by entering the Praetorium! Such was the reasoning of those depraved, disreputable mortals!

That which took place before the Roman Governor is still fresh in our minds and memory. On four separate occasions, Pilate stated that Jesus should be released because he had found Him guilty of no wrongdoing whatsoever. And it was only through fear of losing his political job that he finally acted the role of a coward by delivering Jesus to the raving

mob to be crucified. Pilate sought to "wash his hands" as a symbol of non-guilt, but the relentless clock of time has not yet removed the stain of Innocent Blood!

As we follow His hallowed path from the Praetorium of Pilate to the crest of Calvary's hill, we note that the same mob of evil-minded men persisted in the brutalities and insults, as they gave vent to their hatred of the Son of God! And, as may be expected, Annas and Caiaphas were already leading the procession, giving directions, inciting the by-standers to increase the size of the mob, and, finally, showing the Roman soldiers how to produce the greatest pain, as they mutilated and later crucified the precious Body of the Son of God!

We next witness the Christ leaving the court of Pilate, having been delivered over for the march to Golgotha's hill. Still in the presence and sight of the Roman Governor, Jesus is roughly handled by the low-bred, coarse soldiers and servants of the high priest. After whipping Him until the blood was gushing from His back and chest and arms, they place upon Him an old, dilapidated, purple robe—the symbol of ridicule and scorn—Then they force into His hands a crude reed, to represent a king's scepter—all in further ridicule of His claim to be a king.

But that is not all. Then they plat a sharp crown of thorns and imbeded it so deeply into His brow that the blood fills His precious eyes to where He cannot see. Still not sure that the thorns are deep enough to produce great pain and anguish, they strike Him with sticks over the thorny crown.

Then, with the weary, sore and lame Christ hardly able to stand up, and unable any longer to see, they take turns spitting into His face, and continuing to strike Him over the head!

Those acts of unhuman brutality took place at the front entrance to the palace of the Roman Governor, Pilate, who had given his approval by his silence! It was Pilate upon whose shoulders rested the sole responsibility for the general welfare and best interest of the citizens within Judea—and he smilingly approved of *that!*

This indictment will forever be registered against Pontius Pilate:

1. He ignored his personal knowledge, so expressed four

times, of the innocence of Jesus, by delivering Him over to the mob to be crucified.

2. He cast to the winds the solemn warnings of his wife to have nothing to do with an Innocent Man!

3. Having full power and authority to release Jesus—as he had boasted to the Christ during the trial—he became one of the actors in the awful drama of cold-blooded murder!

4. He played the part of a low-browed coward, when test of character and honor and decency and justice was on trial, by trying to dismiss his guilt and shame through the pitiful and unavailing symbol of “washing his hands” of the Innocent Blood!

5. He cowardly surrendered the authority and dignity of the high office of Governor of Judea by becoming afraid of the cruel-hearted demands of a murderous gang!

6. Rather than run the risk of being removed from office, through the medium of a band of angered Jews, he deliberately gave up custody of an Innocent personality, with full knowledge that He was to be crucified through prejudice, hatred and ill-will!

Let us take a look upon the scene leading to Calvary on that warm Friday morning:

It was now about the tenth hour, and Jesus had had no food nor sleep nor rest. They ignored His fatigue and pain and made Him take on the burden of a heavy, rugged cross, to be carried up the winding slopes to Calvary's hill. The weight of that cross was far more than the normal capacity of the average man—and created a terrible strain upon His already bruised and bleeding shoulders. The scourging before Pilate had left fresh cuts into the flesh, from which blood was plainly seen to flow! No wonder He stumbled, under that great burden, in such circumstances, and was blinded from the blood of that crown of thorns, which, from every step, seemed to press deeper into His precious brow!

It was the Feast of the Passover. The greatest Feast known to Jewry. They were in Jerusalem by the uncounted thousands, and the shops were closed, with the streets crowded with men and women, wandering aimlessly, in search of diver-

sion. Suddenly their attention is attracted by an unusual procession, the order of which was probably as follows:

In the forefront could be seen a small man, carrying a large banner, with this inscription:

"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Following closely behind, is Jesus. His face pallid and wincing with evidence of great pain and anguish as He labors with all of His might to carry the heavy cross. Behind the Master, just a few paces, we recognize a group of Pharisees and Sadducees who seem to be talking and jesting with be-wrinkled Annas, who is holding on to the arm of his disreputable son-in-law, Caiaphas, the high priest. Both are seen to constantly smile as they each take turns waving in acknowledgment to the greetings of their illiterate followers who line the streets at the curb!

Then come the band of Roman soldiers and the servants of the high priest—the cruel executioners—with their spears and swords drawn high, as if to pierce, again, the precious body of the Master, should he, for a fleeting moment, delay the procession in the fulfillment of its unholy assignment! Just a few feet back we can see a great multitude of curiosity-seekers who had by now multiplied into thousands, for they had been attracted, too, by this strange parade of death. They knew that there was to be another crucifixion, but little did they dream that it would go down in human history as the most cruel of all!

There, on the right side of Jesus, but considerably to the rear, we see the one remaining disciple, John, as he holds the arm of the mother of the Christ, seeking, without success, to console and comfort her in that great hour of distress and grief! Immediately to her right, and slightly to the rear, can be seen a mere handful of His friends, for all of the other disciples had "forsook Him and fled". The friends of Jesus who were close by were broken-hearted; while the enemies of the Christ were black-hearted.

All along the route ignorant bigots and drunkards would shout: *"Away with Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him!"*

And is it not strange that, just a few hours before, on those

same streets of that same City of Jerusalem, those same voices were shouting:

"Hosannah to the highest, Praise Him that comes in the Name of the Lord."?

Why the sudden change from praise and adulation to condemnation and villification? What had He done? Where is the man who had accused Him, and thus made Him guilty of such a cruel death? The answer is summed up in four words: Prejudice, Hatred, Jealousy and Ignorance!

As they wind the weary route up Calvary, Jesus becomes completely exhausted; and He begins to swoon and to fall, because of the great load, the steep hills, His weakened condition, and the great loss of blood. Rather than delay the forward march to the execution grounds, they had the Cyrenian come to the aid of Jesus and help Him carry the cross. He did not ask for that help, because, through it all, He was able to bear the pain and the anguish without uttering a single word, or giving token of a single groan! But after travelling only a short distance, and to make sure that His burdens were not made any lighter, they ordered Simon to again place the heavy cross upon the bleeding and painfully sore shoulder of the Son of God!

What a cruel and inhuman sight to behold upon the principal streets of Jerusalem—the City which was close to the heart of Jesus—the City concerning which the Master had only recent wept as He foretold its later destruction. And those tears had hardly dried upon His precious cheeks when His enemies began to make plans to destroy Him!

But now—others in Jerusalem were weeping! When a group of women beheld the pitful sight of the Son of God, staggering under His burden, with His blood-stained garments sticking to His body, and His eyes filled with blood, they began to shed their tears without restraint. And the Christ saw them as they wept; but in that solemn hour, with its misery and pain and anguish, He felt there was no need then for tears of sympathy from anyone. And as He recalled that prophesy about Jerusalem becoming destroyed, He said to them:

"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children."

Yes, there are times when even well-meant sympathy is much out of place. And, on that particular occasion, and at that particular time, Jesus certainly did not want to be looked upon as an object of pity! For with Him it was, in every sense, the fulfillment of the great object of the world's faith; and He also knew, full well, that this type of treatment and suffering was to be exacted of Him at that very hour! He had the sustaining grace and power of Almighty God, and nothing else was of any consequence. He would see it through, regardless of the cost or pain!

Moreover, the Master knew that those tears were more of insult than homage. He felt that they implied the rejection of Him rather than an acknowledgment that He was the Son of God! Tears alone did not fool the Christ, for He could read deeply into the hearts of humankind.

We come now to Golgotha—called the place of the skull—the spot chosen for the final crucifixion. The two thieves are being placed on their crosses, with their hands and feet *tied* thereon. But with the Master, the strong Roman soldiers begin the bloody assignment of *nailing* the feet and hands of Jesus to His cross!

Why the difference in the mode of crucifixion? Why show the self-confessed thieves more humane consideration than Jesus? They had confessed their guilt—no one had proved Jesus guilty of a single wrong! No one could possibly prove Him to be other than a sinless, guiltless Son of God! Because that particular type of crucifixion was known to be the cruellest death within the knowledge of mankind! And it produced the most extreme pain and anguish—beyond description!

They then lifted the bleeding Form of Jesus into an upright position, slightly higher than, and in the middle of, the two thieves who were also crucified. And as soon as the cross was made secure in the ground, Pilate wrote a title, and placed it above the head of the dying Christ. And this was the inscription:

"Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

Pilate saw to it that the explanatory statement was printed into three languages: Hebrew, Latin and Greek—so that all nationalities among the motley crowd present would be able to see and read it, and thus be enabled to join them in their mockery which was thereby intended.

Jesus had not been suspended upon the cross but a few minutes when the Roman soldiers cast lots for His robe, just as the Scriptures had said would happen!

And then, the dying Christ, filled with indescribable pain, looked down from the cross and saw what was taking place. Then, remembering the powerful quality of Divine mercy, He uttered a prayer to His Heavenly Father, asking pardon for His murderers, when He said:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We have already taken note of the host of His enemies present at the crucifixion. We turn now to the smaller group:

Standing close by was His mother, her eyes filled with tears as she clasped her hands together, as if in prayer, and her eyes were trained towards the bleeding, suffering Form of her precious Son! One could see the attitude of abject helplessness written upon her beautiful face, as she occasionally wiped the welling tears from her swollen eyes. Next to her was the faithful disciple whom Jesus loved—John. He was still trying to console that broken-hearted mother of the Christ. Next to him we see Nicodemus; Joseph of Aramathea; Mary Magdalene; Salome, the mother of James and John; Mary, the wife of Cleophas; and Joanna, the wife of Chuza. Maybe a mere handful more, not identified at the moment.

Unable to think of any device which might bring to the Master greater pain, they begin to come forth with outbursts of vile and cheap mockery! They openly and loudly ridiculed Him and laughed at His claim of being the Son of God; and dared Him to come down from the cross, and thus prove His claims. And it is proper to note that the same gang who so miserably disgraced the Sanhedrin were the loudest in their ridicule, saying:

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save!"

Through all the torture and insults and humiliations, hurled at the dying Christ, He showed His limitless bravery and

silent submission by making not a single complaint. Not once was He heard to utter the slightest groan, or give sign of any inclination to offer resistance of any kind! And when we consider as we should, His human qualities and human character, we know that His experience of pain was not only real, but violent beyond imagination! Our only explanation for His unbounded capacity to endure such torture, in silence and meekness, comes from the knowledge that, while He was indeed human—He was also Divine!

It is a matter of common knowledge that, when one has lost a large quantity of blood, such as the Savior had, there is always present, until finally quenched, an insatiable desire for water. The terrible feeling of absolute dryness of the tongue, and the sense of parching of the throat, is such as to aggravate the longing for some kind of liquid. But when Jesus was outstretched upon that cross, His face directly in the sun, prostrate for so long a time, and virtually dying, He cried out:

"I thirst!"

And, oh, what anguish that thirst is bound to have produced—making it the more difficult for Him to even cry for water. And what brutality it was to deny Him just a few drops of cool water from the nearby spring! But no! They were not there to pacify the Sufferer, nor to cool the raging fever of His swollen tongue and throat—because their mission and determination was one of added pain and anguish! Therefore, in keeping with that cruel attitude, they offered Him a sponge, filled with vinegar and gall, which He refused! It is incredible what black hearts will sometimes make men stoop to do!

Let the reader pause for a moment and reflect upon that barbaric scene at Calvary:

There we see Jesus Christ, the Son of God, His arms stretched outward, while His hands and feet have been brutally nailed to the cross. The weight of His Body was such that the nail scars and wounds were, like a fresh cut, or laceration, emitting a large quantity of blood—so much so that the clothes covering His lower extremities are saturated! Then, as we look into His precious face we see evidence of pain and torture—but one can hardly recognize the Victim because of the blood which comes from the deeply imbedded

and cruel crown of thorns. And the Master has now been on the cross for over an hour, suspended, prostrate! His one dying request—after having already asked God to forgive His murderers—was for just a few drops of cool water to cool His throat and tongue—but the hard-hearted, contemptible cowards turn a deaf ear to His plea! Instead, they pass Him a sponge dipped in bitter gall and vinegar!

The human mind, I am sure, will never be able to conceive of a more dastardly show of indifference to human torture and excruciating anguish than that displayed by Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and the rest of the gang assembled at the foot of that cross, awaiting the moment of the temporary death of the Son of God!

Perhaps His Heavenly Father did answer that prayer of His Son that they be forgiven—upon the theory that they knew not what they were doing. It is not for us to speculate about. But certainly this observation can be made: It was a tremendous request to make, in such circumstances, and it served to magnify the true spirit of eternal forgiveness and unfailing compassion of the Savior, Jesus Christ! There in those final moments of transition from life to temporary death, His noble and sweet character and personality had not changed one iota. Though they had broken His bleeding heart, there still remained ample room in that heart of His for a continuance of typical compassion and sympathy as He fervently and reverently prayed for full pardon!

Was He not in a forgiving spirit to the very end? What about the dying thief on the cross who, unlike his companion, asked the Master to remember him when He was in His Paradise? You know the answer—he was saved at that very moment. Indeed, the Master could, even then, save others from the tormenting and eternal fires of an awful hell! The other thief, we recall, joining in the reviling of Jesus, like the cowards below the cross, and we may well assume that his lack of faith and blasphemous expressions of contempt and ridicule of the dying Christ won him his reward—eternal punishment within the jaws of Hades!

All is quiet once more. Then Jesus looking slightly to His left, sees the broken hearted mother, Mary, standing there with John—and John is still trying to console and comfort her

in those final moments of distress and anguish. Then the Christ said to her:

"Woman, behold thy son."

Then He turned directly towards John and said:

"John, behold thy mother!"

Was not that a heart-rending scene? Jesus, in His dying moments, realized that, after the resurrection on the following Sunday morning, there would no longer be the sweet pleasure of companionship with His precious mother. So, as His last will and testament, dying upon the cross, He willed the tender care and affection of His mother into the keeping of the disciple whom He loved! Just another illustration of how perfectly Jesus obeyed every command and wish of God! He well remembered the commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." And, as the tinge of death began to supplant the fire of life, He never failed to keep uppermost in His heart and mind the duties and responsibilities of the true Son of God!

As we read the Biblical story of the tragedy of the crucifixion, and we note that none of the half-brothers of Jesus were there, some may wonder why they were not present, aiding and consoling their own mother in those dire moments of travail. The reason for this can be found in the fact that none of them believed Jesus to be Divine. It was sometime after the resurrection that His half-brother, James, became a convert! Like so many others, including Thomas, one of the supposedly loyal disciples, they had to see the nail-scarred hands before they would believe!

Turning momentarily back to the cross:

About noontime there appeared giant clouds which covered the sunshine and created a condition of complete darkness, akin to night, and then there was pictured a curtain which seemed to cover over and surround the tragedy of the cross, as if God did not want those cruel men to longer gaze upon the agonizing and dying Son! All the while the Master was completely and majestically silent—bearing His suffering alone! Then just as the dark clouds seemed to be breaking, He sensed a feeling of being abandoned by all—and He cried out, in a loud voice:

"My God! My God!, Why has Thou forsaken Me?"

That exclamation of His carried a tone of deep anguish and indescribable suffering and pain, as though conscious of desolation! And as we think on this sad and lonely part of the fiendish crucifixion we must keep in mind and memory that the Christ, though Divine, was in human form, with a heart and mind; and with sensibilities of humankind. To be sure it was not, for a moment, a shaking of faith in His Father above, but more of a human expression of desolation as the sweet and true fellowship with God Almighty was about to be temporarily suspended, until the hour of His miraculous resurrection on that following Sunday morn!

Then those at the foot of the tragic cross, completely without faith, and with misunderstanding, said:

"Let us see if Elijah will come and take Him down."

Jesus was not appealing for Elijah or His Heavenly Father to "come and take Him down" from that cross! He had long ago determined to see it through, irrespective of pain, anguish, disillusionment or disappointment! Surely He had every reason to be possessed with a broken heart, as He was stretched out on that lonely and rugged cross—dying for the sins of a lost and indifferent world!

And now—this inquiry: Have you not been deeply moved by this true picture of His human suffering and His Divine Personality? And also, by the countless cruelties so wrongfully inflicted upon Him by His cruel enemies, who knew all the while that He was sinless and guiltless?

This review, then, will be concluded by taking you, once more, quietly and reverently, to the foot of that rugged cross on Calvary's hill on that same Friday afternoon, to witness the unfolding of the last act of that tragic drama involving the precious Son of God!

As we approach the scene we are inspired by the complete silence about us. The very atmosphere had become tense—so much so that the only sound is that of an occasional patter of blood-drops which are still coming from the brutal scars made by those spikes or nails! No longer does anyone speak in cheap derision of the Master, for by now the final insults have been hurled, and the last acts of violence committed. His enemies, still poisoned by the abject hate of a prejudiced

heart, await the moment of His expiration—which will then be the culmination of their sordid conspiracies and base treachery!

The Christ appears calm—resting—silent, as if still in prayer! Still not a word of complaint nor a groan fall from His parched but precious lips! Then—He moves His head, slightly, as it is raised Heavenward, and He is heard to whisper:

"It is finished! Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit!"

What a beautiful climax! What a majestic way to terminate world-relationships—by commending the Spirit into the hands of Almighty God! And, oh, what an expression of faith!

After those words fell from the lips of Jesus, and it was apparent to all present that He had given up the Spirit, there could be heard, below the cross, the very nervous and quivering voice of one of the executioners—a Roman soldier—who said, in an air of complete dismay:

"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

But—to be sure, the belated acknowledgment of His true Messiahship came too late for him! Much too late—for now, as we know, they had already murdered the "Innocent Blood."

Maybe—only conjecture of course—when the earthquake came, and the lightning began to crash, and the rocks were split in two, and the dead began to come forth from their graves, it was God's way of showing His displeasure over the cruelties inflicted upon His only begotten Son! Because they did not have to be as cruel and inhuman as they were—even though they were determined to kill Him by crucifixion. There was no need to beat Him, spit into His face, force a crown of thorns upon His brow, and then pierce His precious side with a pointed spear! Only corrupt and cowardly and heartless men would have done such a thing—so, probably our Heavenly Father resented *that* kind of treatment!

Let us, in these closing moments, take note of the significance of those last words of Jesus. When He said "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit," He then proved, forever, that He sincerely believed for Himself that which He

so courageously and often taught others to believe! This, truly, was His re-affirmation of man's only hope for peace unto the soul and the joy of eternal life, in the Kingdom of God!

And, now—let us consider this statement of His:

"It is finished!"

What, one might rightfully inquire, was "finished"?

Concerning those individuals and groups who so cowardly mistreated and subsequently crucified the Christ, these were forever finished:

1. Annas, the cheap, conspiring political boss of Judea, whose scheming to destroy the Christ met with failure because of His glorious resurrection on the third day, just as He had said. Annas lies somewhere in an unmarked grave, long since devoured by time's relentless hand! The memory of his name is but an abomination!

2. Caiaphas, the discredited and despised high priest, who forever disgraced the office he was wholly unfit to hold—and who went to his grave with the stain of the Blood of Jesus upon his putrid hands—for he was the arch murderer of the Son of God! He is never referred to except in justified condemnation and abject contempt!

3. Judas Iscariot, the arch traitor of the Master who, in desperation and remorse, rightly hanged himself upon the public highway near Jerusalem. The worms took care of him hundreds and hundreds of years ago. When he took his own life, he could hear the echo of the Master's voice Who said of him: *"It would be better if that man had never been born!"*

4. Pontius Pilate, the moral coward, whose conduct toward Jesus was so repulsive that the Emperor, after learning of the crucifixion of Jesus, had him not only removed from office as Governor of Judea, but condemned him to die with the stain of guilt upon his depraved and cowardly heart!

5. Herod Antipas, the king, who, like his father before him, completely discredited the kingship of his domain; and who made sport of humiliating and trying to embarrass the Christ. He lived long enough to talk with the more than five thousand men and women who were eye witnesses to the scene when Jesus was lifted by the clouds of Heaven into the

Castle of God Almighty. And he lived to regret his attitude and conduct in relation to the Christ!

6. The Sanhedrin—supposedly the great Supreme Court of the Jews—but which, by reason of their cowardly treatment of Jesus, was quickly abandoned in utter disgrace a short while after the crucifixion of their Holy Victim! And today, after the passage of almost two thousand years, the Jews are ashamed of its black record of treachery and infamy!

7. The Pharisees and Sadducees and the group of Roman soldiers who played their vicious and cowardly parts in the awful drama of the "trials" and crucifixion of Jesus. They are all gone now—faded into the catacombs of forgotten dreams—but the record of their deeds stands indelibly imprinted into the inspired Word of God for men and women and little children, and those of generations yet unborn, to see and read and understand!

8. And there has now been forever finished, and sealed within the archives of Biblical history, the black record of the unfair, illegal "trials" of the Master, which paint a picture of disgrace and villainy for all to see. For His so-called "trials" were no more than a farce—judicial murder, perpetrated by depraved and cowardly men!

And now, in respect to the Son of God, what was *finished*?

His final words on Calvary's cross were but the solemn, truthful pronouncement of His ultimate victory—eternal victory not only over death, but the forces which produce death! Moreover, it was the perpetual stamp of finality upon His ministry upon this earth as He, courageously, and against all apparent odds, sought to teach a sin-filled world the way of Life Eternal!

By His death on the cross, He had magnificently finished His noble part in God's plan of Salvation—and He finished it in loyal obedience, meekness, submission and courage; ready and willing to carry out the will of His Father in Heaven! His unchanging attitude; His fidelity of purpose; from the childish utterances at the Temple, when only twelve, to the final statement on the crest of Calvary, was this:

"Not My will, but Thine be done!"

Certainly this should be added: When His part was "finished," there was immediately created eternal hope for man's salvation—the only remaining hope—for life everlasting and peace to the soul!

In conclusion:

There has now been unfolded, in this review, the tragic drama of what may be properly denominated a judicial murder of the Son of God. He was not given the remotest semblance of a legal trial. The entire proceedings were born of a cowardly conspiracy and nurtured in hate and spleen. The eighteen errors assigned herein should certainly be sufficient evidence to convince any fair-minded individual, seeking the truth, that, on that memorable Friday, in the year A. D. 30, when the Master was subjected to the whims of brutal cowards, Justice was indeed asleep, while wrong ruled the land!